THE LABOUR MONTHLY

A MAGAZINE OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR

Editor: R. PALME DUTT

Volume 9 January, 1927 Number 1

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

Notes of the Month

THE SPECIAL CONFERENCE

The Communist Party and the Miners' Fight
P. B.

The Miners' Struggle and International Unity
R. PAGE ARNOT

Imperial Defence
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Great Britain and China
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NOTES of the MONTH

After the Fight—Why Postponed?—Living Issues—More Urgent Now—Capitalism's "Solution"—Conference Tasks—Larger Issues—Future General Strike?—Problem of Leadership—Bureaucracy and Working Class—Testing the Left—The Miners' Role—The Future of Trade Unionism

THE postponed Special Conference of Trade Union Executives on the general strike takes place at the time and under the conditions prepared for it. For seven months the Labour Party and General Council leaders have worked for the defeat of the miners as the sole means of saving themselves and defending their position. They have now secured their aim. The miners, the vanguard of the working class, are for the time broken on the wheel; their fight without parallel in working-class history, whose permanent results as the first chapter in the new revolutionary era will make every sacrifice a hundred times worth while and bring rich fruit to the working class, has been for the moment turned to nothing by the deliberate strike breaking of the national and international reformist leadership, who know and fear the coming revolutionary period and devote all their attention and energy to stifling any action of the working class. The workers are bludgeoned on every side, and bound by their leaders. The key battalions of the workers, the miners, transport workers, railwaymen, seamen, printers, are all now tied hand and foot by shackling agreements unequalled in half-a-century of trade unionism. Further wage and hour attacks are preparing. Victimisation, police persecution and dismissals are the order of the day. The atmosphere is at last "safe" for all the reformist leaders to come into the open without shame. For the first time for ten months Thomas holds a meeting in his constituency. MacDonald, Henderson, Hicks, Purcell and Newbold can return from their trans-continental voyages to Africa, America, Mexico, Australia. The aims of industrial peace, capitalist revival and scientific wage policies can be openly proclaimed. In this situation the time has come at last to hold the Special Conference safely. In the midst of

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the working-class defeat and misery they have caused, the reformist leaders can meet to pass their verdict of "Well done!" upon themselves.

OFFICIALLY, the Special Conference was postponed in order to concentrate on effective united action in support of the miners, "so that a united policy may be adopted to resist to the fullest possible extent the Government action"; and to prevent any criticism or controversy that might hinder such united action "the General Council and the Miners' Federation regard it as of the greatest importance at this juncture that all sections and parties should avoid statements either in speech or writing which create friction, or misunderstanding, or divert attention from the purpose in view." How far these two alleged purposes have been carried out can now be judged in the light of facts. So far from any attempt at action in support, blackleg coal was consistently let through in defiance of the miners' official appeals, even financial aid was sabotaged by being left to voluntary channels, and a continuous propaganda was conducted to weaken the miners, extract concessions and secure their surrender. As for the silencing of criticism, this was evidently intended to apply only to the miners' leaders as there immediately followed the Bromley publication of the more poisonous passages of the General Council's Report, thereafter to constitute the principal capitalist weapon of propaganda against the miners ("Unionist members are busily engaged in procuring copies of Mr. Bromley's article on the T.U.C., which will be read out at meetings all over the country during the week-end," *Spectator*, July 10, 1926), and, following this, the endless stream of attacks by MacDonald, Williams, Thomas, Hodges, &c., which, as Mr. Baldwin's speech in the House of Commons debate on December 8 showed, constituted the inexhaustible supply of the capitalist armoury of propaganda against the miners. Thus what was argued by the revolutionaries at the time, that the alleged reasons for the postponement of the Conference were false, and that the real reason was to tie up the miners' leaders in a pact and to prevent either discussion or the practical facing of issues of action until too late, that is, until after the miners' defeat, has now been shown by the facts to be correct. It remains for the miners'

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leaders now at the Conference to say what they think of the pact and its maintenance, and of the promise of "a united policy to resist to the fullest possible extent the Government action."

THE issues of the Special Conference are not dead, but living issues. It is not only that what happened in May, 1926, is the decisive turning point for a whole period in front, and above all the decisive test of the whole existing leadership. It is still more that the events of May, 1926, are no isolated self-contained episode, but are part of a continuous process, linked up with what preceded, and still going on and unfolding itself and presenting anew the same fundamental problems to the working class. The process of capitalist development and policy in Britain which gave rise to the crisis of May is still continuing, and in a sharper form than ever. The economic and political offensives against the workers are still in course of revealing their full outline. Capitalism in Britain can still find no way forward, so long as it continues to carry the existing accumulated burden which drives it down in the international race, save to drive down still lower the standards of the workers, to lengthen hours, to speed up and intensify production, to concentrate plant and holdings and sack workers ; and all this only intensifies international competition and class antagonism at home, and so perpetually renews the crisis, driving the workers forward, in spite of habits, prejudices and years of inculcated rubbish, as well as corrupt, easy-going and rule-of-thumb leadership, to find new ways, to seek for united action, to enlarge their action at every crisis and to advance more and more to the only solution, the revolutionary solution, which cuts the property tangle, and so alone makes possible the rational, *i.e.*, Socialist, organisation of production.

IF reformism failed the workers in May, how much more must it fail them in the present and future situation, when all the factors which have increasingly destroyed its basis are only aggravated and intensified by the events of 1926 ; and, therefore, how much more necessary is it to face those questions which were not answered in May, and which still remain accusingly demanding their answer, if the whole Labour Movement is not to disintegrate

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and fall back? What has changed since May? The old Labour Movement has been through the wars with a peace-time apparatus, and received the shattering that was inevitable. Whether that shattering was healthy or not depends entirely on what happens now, and on the power of the new forces to make rapid changes and adapt the movement. The workers are worse off; they are momentarily disorganised; and capitalism presses the offensive against them harder than ever. The old leaders seize on this situation to draw the moral of retreat, to throw over all the principles of class solidarity and Socialism, and to revert to economic sectional unionism and Liberal politics. But the conditions of the period provide no basis for this reversion, which is nothing more than a hankering after decaying and empty fleshpots; and, therefore, although their control of the machine enables the old leaders to give this appearance of a "swing to the right," as at Bournemouth and Margate, it does not correspond to realities, and brings no solution either to the problems of the movement or of the social situation. It is only necessary to look at the realities of the position to see this.

CAPITALISM has "solved" the problem of the coal-mining industry—which is only the advance version of the problem of all British capitalism—after its own fashion. No one can dispute that capitalism has here had an entirely free hand, secured by the use of its political power or dictatorship, to determine the solution entirely according to its own lines without one atom of opposition, hindrance or compromise. And what is this "solution"? It is that fewer men should work harder for longer hours on a starvation wage, while two to three hundred thousand others are turned on to the streets to join the permanently unemployed. This is the "rational" or "economic" solution. Does it solve anything? It leads at once to intensified international competition and coal war, as witnessed in the British coalowners' refusal of the German owners' proposal of a selling agreement, the new threats to hours on the Continent, and the impending attack on American miners' wages due for next April. And it leads to intensified unemployment and social division at home. Is there here any prospect of peace? But what happens to mining hangs

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over the other basic industries in turn, as is already visible in the Keynes campaign over textiles and proposals for closing down superfluous factories. Capitalist reorganisation, because it cannot touch any of the real evils, which are protected by the magic halo of property, can only be carried through at the cost of the workers, and even then leads only to sharper crises. This economic process cannot be affected by any Labour Government, unless that Labour Government is prepared to attack and cut into property rights (not "reorganise" with compensation, which only resolves itself into a form of capitalist reorganisation); and this is just what the reformists are not prepared to do. Consequently this process is bound to continue and lead to intensified struggle, whatever the results of the next election, which itself can only be a phase in the development of the total struggle and not an alternative. If the Special Conference fails to face this prospect of developing struggle and the problems raised by it—which is the real meaning of any inquest on May—then the Special Conference will not thereby escape or eliminate these problems, but will only make their eventual facing by the workers more difficult.

WHAT are the tasks of the Special Conference of Trade Union Executives which meets on January 20 for the first time since the fateful meeting of May 1? Speaking generally, its task is to review the experience of the General Strike and to draw the lessons from it. In particular, its task is in the first place to receive the report on the General Strike, and to determine whether its mandate of May 1 was carried out or not, and if not, why not. It is clear that the mandate of May 1 to defend the miners' standards, understood in the terms of the then still unrepudiated General Council's pledge ("no reduction in wages, no increase in working hours"), was not carried out; and that, further, the General Council had already secretly decided since April 8 not to carry it out, and was already at variance with the miners, but that this was deliberately withheld from the Conference; and that this double-dealing and secret diplomacy beforehand made certain and inevitable from the start the subsequent collapse and division. The Conference will have to deal with this, as well as with the actual conduct of the strike, the

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unconditional calling off without any attempt at obtaining guarantees, nominally on the basis of the thin and obvious hoax of the Samuel Memorandum and the completely contradictory explanations subsequently of individual members of the General Council of the reasons for the calling off. It will be a very feeble Conference if this whole flimsy edifice of double-dealing and treachery is not riddled with searching questions.

BUT the Conference will have to extend its view further to larger questions. The real reasons for the collapse of May, the consequences and the present situation, the character of the conditions within which the Trade Unions will henceforth have to work and the resulting needs, and whether the existing leadership is capable of meeting these conditions and needs—these questions will have to be faced. To-day the Trade Unions are broken up ; there is no longer any appearance of common leadership or policy ; the attack on the miners is passing to the other industries ; the best of the workers are being picked off individually by the employers; and a legal offensive on Trade Union rights is preparing. How is this position to be met ? What is the policy of Trade Unionism ? If common action is abandoned, what remains ? If common action is to be maintained, what steps are being taken that it shall be effective and that the failures of May shall not be repeated ? Is a committee at work, preparing the necessary steps, drawing up the lessons of May, marking out the immediate steps in Trade Unionism necessary, laying down the conditions and methods of future mobilisation ? If not, why not ? What is the General Council's view of the future period facing Trade Unionism, and of its own function ?

ABOVE all, is another General Strike expected, or is it not? Some of the principal leaders of the General Council (including the present Chairman) say, Yes. Others equally emphatically say, No. How can Trade Unionism go forward so long as there is this complete blur and confusion on the central issue of the present period ? The General Council is able to go forward quite cheerfully and amicably with these complete cross purposes in its midst, because the

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General Council does not attempt to do anything. But this only means that the "difference" in their ranks is simply for show, and does not represent anything. Those who say, Yes, say it as a kind of declaration of religious conviction, and have no practical proposals to make. In other words, by their actions they say, No. It is as if members of the present Cabinet were to hold amicable discussions in magazines as to whether another war may or may not be likely, and in the meantime were to make no military or naval preparations. (Incidentally, when these same Labour leaders become the next Labour Government they will have no such hesitations about preparing ; they will be anxious that every item of military and naval armaments for the defence of the bourgeois State shall be up to concert pitch, and forget all their pacifist arguments against "preparedness." It is only over working-class defence that they are indifferent.)

THE "unity" of the General Council is the unity of inaction, of passivity, of absence of policy, of denial of leadership, of denial of the working-class fight. They have no policy to present, no coherent view of the present period of the line in front. They can only hide behind formalities, behind closing of discussion as at Bournemouth, behind dishonest formal diplomatic small-clerk circumlocution-office defences of particular acts, without any facing of larger issues. But does this outlook represent the outlook of the working-class movement ? If it does, then there is a bigger smash than ever coming, and deservedly. But if it does not, if there are any sound elements that are concerned for a moment with the future fight, then how can such elements tolerate the continuance of such a leadership, which can only lead to disaster by paralysing preparation to-day and strangling the fight to-morrow ? Can the Conference of Trade Union Executives, as a closed-in conference of the bureaucracy which is responsible for the present position, perform these tasks or face up to actual issues ? Certainly the Conference of Trade Union Executives has no claim as a representative conference of the working class. If a Conference were called of delegates directly elected by the organised workers during the current month from every locality in the country, the General Council would have a very different audience to face,

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and there would be no doubt of the result (the District Trades Councils Conferences called by the General Council already showed this). The reformist bureaucracy cannot jump outside its own skin and see itself as the workers see it; and therefore the historical value of its verdict is negligible save as a sidelight on itself. But the Special Conference of Trade Union Executives on the General Strike has this importance; that it focusses attention on those issues which are of vital concern to the working class. It is the discussion in the working class that is important, far more than the discussion in the Conference. The issues need to be hammered out throughout the working-class movement. Resolutions should pour in on the Executives and to the Conference itself.

IN addition, there is a further importance of the Conference in relation to the bureaucracy itself. The Special Conference is an extension of the testing of the bureaucracy in the light of the events of May. The Report of the General Council compels the setting down in black and white of the outlook and responsibility of the defeatist majority, whether of the openly corrupt Right or the capitulatory Left. This Report has either to be approved or disapproved by the Conference. Whoever approve this Report set themselves down in equal responsibility with the General Council for the events of May. Whoever disapprove have to state clearly their opposition and their alternative. The crisis of May 12 ceases to be a personal condemnation of a handful of individuals who chanced to compose the General Council, and becomes the merciless test of the whole reformist bureaucracy. Is there any element that is still sound and capable of standing out against the corrupt defeatist policy of the General Council? If so, the place is here or nowhere for that minority to show what it is worth. The minority has to declare itself or merge in the defeatist majority by the same compulsion as in the days of May smashed the capitulatory Left. Three honest speeches and votes in the Conference are worth three hundred wise voices in private conversation. The issue is so serious that the principle of delegation voting, which is merely the cloak of irresponsibility, needs to be actively challenged. Every atom of strength of the minority needs to be registered behind a clear resolution. Failing this (and if formal rules are used to

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prevent it, nothing can prevent a signed public declaration), responsibility falls individually upon all alike.

THE heaviest responsibility in the Conference for good or evil falls upon the miners' representatives. In a special degree the immediate future in working-class politics turns upon their role and their understanding of their role. This the miners' leaders have not yet recognised. They have still regarded the experience and struggle through which they have gone, not so much as a common experience and struggle of the whole working class, carrying with it equal tasks for the whole working-class movement, but subjectively, in the old sectional Trade Union tradition, as a special experience and struggle of the miners, in a position of peculiar distress, calling for help from the whole working class, but regarding the action of the rest of the working class as the affair of those sections rather than of the miners. This was apparent in the preliminaries of the General Strike and during the General Strike. It has been shown in the criminal inaction of the miners' representatives on the General Council. It has been shown most of all in the criminal failure at the Bournemouth and Margate Congresses, a failure that was nothing less than a betrayal of the sacrifice and struggle of the men they led. Signs of the same outlook are still visible in the reported statement of Cook with regard to the Special Conference, when interviewed by the *Daily Herald* representative on the proposal of the General Council to hold it in January :—

> "It is not the business of the miners, and the miners will not place any objection in the way of the matter being thrashed out." (*Daily Herald*, December 1, 1926.)

Such an attitude needs to be ended once and for all. The miners are not only part of the working-class movement ; they are the greatest single part ; and by their action, self-sacrifice and disciplined courage, the greatest part in spirit and understanding and the height of the level they have reached ; and in virtue of this they have not only the right, but the duty, to speak with authority to the whole working class, and to give the full weight of leadership and strength that they can give to the whole working-class movement. It is the first opportunity at the Special Con-

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ference to begin to redeem the ground lost at Bournemouth and at Margate.

FINALLY it is clear that the most important development must come from outside the Special Conference, and not from inside. The bureaucracy cannot and will not reform itself. It is the pressure from outside, from the organised workers themselves, that must change the character of Trade-Union leadership and the direction of Trade Unionism. Hence, the most important task of all is the development and strengthening of the Minority Movement in the Trade Unions. The new forces cannot find expression without organisation ; and such organisation must be based on the common class interests of all the workers, acting as a single force on the myriad, sectionalist hidebound structure of Trade Unionism. This is the essential significance of the Minority Movement (and in a higher degree of the Communist Party) within the Trade Unions. It is the expression of class interests transcending sectional interests. It is in the strongest sense the expression, not of disruption, but of unity ; just as the reactionary reformist leaders represent the forces of disruption, as their policy shows. Hitherto the Minority Movement has been able to organise powerful mass pressure upon the bureaucracy. But in the moment of crisis it has not been strong enough to take over the leadership. The policies which it has forced upon the reformist leaders have been distorted, sabotaged and destroyed by them. The task of the present period is not only to exert pressure on the reformist bureaucracy, but to overthrow them and wrest the leadership from them. Such a task demands redoubled work throughout the Trade Union Movement. In the future period crisis will succeed crisis with increasing intensity. The power of the working class to meet them and go forward will depend in large measure on the power to adapt the Trade Unions in time, to learn the lessons of past crises and to win them to a revolutionary policy. The Trade Unions cannot long remain in their present half-and-half position. It is the open aim of Baldwin and the bourgeoisie to transform them into subordinate sectional industrial organs of capitalism. It is our aim to transform them into united organs of the revolutionary working class. R. P. D.

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THE COMMUNIST PARTY AND THE MINERS' FIGHT

By P. B.

"*We are defeated, but neither dismayed nor destroyed.*"
(From a miner's speech.)

THE mine owners have won. Supported by the Government, by the banks, by the Press, by the Liberal leaders of the Labour Party, and the bureaucrats of the Trade Union movement, they have succeeded in forcing the miners back to work on the conditions which they formulated on the eve of the lockout. They are now ringing the joy bells of victory. The pigmies of thought who are capable only of crawling on their bellies are now speaking arrogantly of "blind Samsons" and "incompetent leaders." The capitalist Press is jubilant. Banquets and orgies are held in the Savoy and other haunts of the rich where Labour leaders and captains of industry clink glasses to "peace in our time." Yet everyone knows that the great fight which has just terminated is only a beginning, that the miners are neither dismayed nor destroyed, and that still further and greater battles are in front.

The end of the fight has revealed the lie on which all the enemies of the workers have united. It is now clear to all what the programme of the mine owners and the mine owners' Government means in actual fact. Half a million miners are working on half-starvation wages; another half a million miners are starving without employment; coal is not cheaper, but dearer. The lowering of the miners' standards was supposed to give an impetus to the development of British industry. Instead it has given an impetus to other employers, backed by all the powers of the State, to lower the standards of the toiling masses and to increase profits. That "harmony," in the name of which the Baldwins, the MacDonalds, and the Snowdens have made so many sweet and soothing speeches, is now exploited by a group of mine owners,

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whose incompetency and inefficiency were exposed and condemned even by the capitalists of the Royal Commission on the coal industry.

The myth of " harmony " has completely vanished, and there only remains the grim struggle between class and class. The heroic fight of the miners is undoubtedly the greatest asset which the working class has to its credit for the last century, and it is bound to become a source of inspiration in the battles which are drawing nearer and nearer.

One of the outstanding factors of the miners' struggle is that a *political organisation* played a great part in consolidating the miners and in formulating their programme, their demands and their actions. We are referring to the numerically weak Communist Party of Great Britain, which has been excluded from the Labour Party by all its conferences since 1922, and against which the Labour Party, led by MacDonald, and the Conservative Government, headed by Baldwin and Joynson-Hicks, organised a formal alliance.

The fact that the Communist Party played a leading part in this great struggle is acknowledged by everyone. During the last few months Joynson-Hicks stated on two occasions in the House of Commons that he was compelled to ban the meetings of the Communist Party because he knew that the campaign of this Party was aimed at preventing the miners from accepting the conditions of the mine owners. The leaders of the Labour Party accepted this explanation and did not challenge it. Further, at the delegate conference of the miners held in London on November 18, when the results of the magnificent vote of the miners against the Government proposals were reported, many delegates emphasised the fact that this vote was due to a very great extent to the influence of the Communist Party. It should also be noted that the famous South Wales programme, which was eventually accepted by the Miners' Federation as a whole, was prepared on the initiative of the Communist Party. But we are interested not so much in stating or proving this fact, as in explaining why and how this small Party has exercised such a great influence during a struggle which is rightly considered as the watershed in the history of British Labour.

In order to answer these questions, we must first try to under-

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stand what was the role of the Labour Party during this great conflict.

The Labour Party Executive, as also the General Council of the Trades Union Congress, have long ceased to act as democratic institutions. The Labour movement very rarely knows what are the intentions and strategy of these leading bodies in our movement. Since many of the members of these bodies have become privy councillors, they have accepted the rules and traditions of that institution—the privy council—which usually acts in secret. It is true that once in a while these Labour Leaders deign to make statements and pronouncements. But these public statements are usually meant to throw dust in the eyes of the workers, and to hide their real intentions and their real policy.

In order to understand the role played by the Labour Party, we must compare the events which preceded the Red Friday of 1925 with the events and the display of force during the recent conflict. In 1925 the mobilisation of the workers was centred in the hands of the General Council then headed by Mr. Swales. The General Council, in full agreement with the Executive of the Miners' Federation, made every effort possible to prevent the interference of the leaders of the Labour Party. The obvious reason for this policy was that the industrial leaders, who were at that time much nearer to the masses, were afraid that the leaders of the Labour Party might try to enforce a foul compromise.

The spirit of the Trade Union movement which culminated in the victory of Red Friday found its expression in the presidential address delivered by Mr. Swales at the Scarborough T.U.C.

He said :

> Union policy henceforth will be to recover lost ground, to re-establish and *improve our standards of wages* (our italics), hours and working conditions, and to co-ordinating and intensifying trade union action for the winning of a larger measure of control in industry for the workers.

It is quite evident that Mr. MacDonald had nothing to do either with the preparations for Red Friday, or with the spirit of that period. The conditions changed on the eve of the crisis of 1926. MacDonald was one of the speakers at the conference which decided upon the general strike. In order to justify the appeal of the *Daily Herald :* " Trust your Leaders! " on the first

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day of the strike, MacDonald declared on the day following: "I don't like general strikes, I have not changed my opinion, I have said so in the House of Commons that I don't like it, honestly I don't like it; but honestly, what can be done." Later he found what could be done, and he got rid of the thing which he honestly hated.

MacDonald and his associates were active the whole of the time. He and Thomas were even proud of the fact that they grovelled for peace. Behind the scenes they worked hard to discourage the miners and to pave the way for the victory of the mine owners. The work done by the leaders of the Labour Party during the recent struggle is now common knowledge. Mr. Baldwin, in his answer to the vote of censure moved on behalf of the Labour Party, against the wish of its leaders, made it perfectly clear that the Government acted in full harmony with the leadership of the Labour Party and of the General Council against the miners. To put it in the words of the pious Prime Minister, the miners let down the Government, the Labour Party and the General Council. Poor lambs!

From what we have said it is quite evident that the Labour Party could not have assumed the leadership of the miners' fight. All they could do was to dismay the miners, to weaken their resistance, and to discourage them. And the miners had to look elsewhere for a lead.

We see that it was made quite clear in a previous article in the LABOUR MONTHLY (December) that the miners' fight had two aspects—an industrial and a political aspect. We have seen that the miners had every reason to be disgusted with the leaders of the Labour Party. Could they look to the General Council for guidance and inspiration? Until the days of May the miners showed that they had great confidence in the General Council, and agreed to vest full powers in the Council to negotiate and try to reach a settlement on their behalf. But the situation underwent a change during the nine days of the general strike, which was called, let it be remembered, to support the miners. During those nine days a new alliance was formed. In 1925 we had an alliance of the miners with the General Council against the liberal leaders of the Labour Party. In the first days of May the General Council

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formed an alliance with the liberal leaders of the Labour Party against the miners. The miners had to look for guidance elsewhere.

Many of the miners' leaders were under the impression that this lead might come from the I.L.P. Prior to and during the great fight that Party spoke very loudly about socialism in our time, a living minimum wage, and so on. One would naturally have expected from this that the I.L.P. would have thrown all its weight into a fight which mobilised the greatest forces of Socialism, and which was directed against an attempt to lower wages already far below a decent living wage. But one of the lessons of the recent struggle is that political parties should be judged not by their words, but by their deeds. The living wage scheme of the I.L.P. has turned out to be nothing more than a window-dressing slogan. The authors of this scheme overlooked the simple fact that there is no such thing as an abstract living wage. A living wage is the outcome of the relation of forces in general, and of the strength of the Labour movement in particular. Wages are raised or lowered, not by scientific commissions, but on the battlefield of struggle between the workers and the capitalists. While the I.L.P. turned its back on the living issue of over a million miners fighting for a decent wage, it was a comparatively easy thing to reach an agreement on this problem with MacDonald and with MacDonald's associates. The I.L.P. wanted an inquiry in order to establish a living wage. They agreed with MacDonald that it was possible at the beginning to have an inquiry as to whether an inquiry was necessary. The Labour movement would win nothing from the "victory" of the I.L.P.; they do not lose anything by its compromise. The only fact of importance is that, since the I.L.P. showed that they preferred to defend the living wage by phrases, and not by acts, they lost the right to play an important part in the miners' struggle. The collapse of the I.L.P. on this issue dates from the time when they refused to accept the proposals of the Communist Party to take part in a joint campaign for the embargo and a levy.

But the great tragedy of the miners' fight consisted in the fact that even the Executive of the Miners' Federation was not capable of conducting the struggle. The majority of the miners'

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leaders treated the fight simply as an industrial dispute. They were unable to grasp the political implications of the struggle, and for that reason they were as a rule far behind the miners themselves in the most critical periods of the fight. We know, of course, that the most powerful forces of this country worked in unison for the defeat of the miners. Still, it remains a fact that in the last instance the resistance of the miners was broken by their own leaders.

We are thus brought to the conclusion that only an organisation which had a clearer outlook, a clearer understanding of the issues involved, and had sufficient courage to face all the implications of the struggle, could play a leading part during the crisis. The question which now arises is whether the Communist Party was strong enough to fill the bill. To answer this question we must turn to the documents and to the most important events during this historic period. Before coming to the documents themselves, we must, however, make one preliminary remark. A survey of the documents concerned shows clearly that the Communist Party and the Minority Movement worked in the same direction. In other words, we believe that we are entitled to say that the Minority Movement in general, and the Miners' Minority Movement in particular, fully accepted the lead of the Communist Party during this fight. The Minority Movement had only two policies to choose from—the policy of the General Council, which meant surrender, and the policy of the Communist Party, which meant a grim fight. The Minority Movement had the courage to accept the latter.

Now let us come to the documents.

The miners' struggle began practically on the day following Red Friday, July 31, 1925. On May 1, 1926, it only entered a new stage. Immediately after Red Friday the Communist Party made it perfectly clear that the ensuing nine months was only a breathing space, and that it would depend upon the workers whether Red Friday would be translated into a real victory, or whether this breathing space would be utilised by the Government alone, and the miners would be ultimately crushed. In the editorial of the *Workers' Weekly* immediately after Red Friday, the Communist Party warned the workers that

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> The Government, acting on behalf of the capitalist class, is certain to prepare for a new struggle with the working class under more favourable conditions than this time and will endeavour to break the united front of the workers in order to make this attack successful.

If we take the *Workers' Weekly* for the second half of 1925, we will see that this warning is repeated again and again. The Communist Party tried not only to keep the question of the inevitable struggle ahead before the workers, but made efforts to put the matter in the clearest way possible before the responsible bodies of the Labour movement. We are referring to the letters sent out by this Party to the General Council of the T.U.C. and to the Labour Party Executive, in which those bodies were called upon to start an immediate campaign among the forces. The Communist Party was convinced that the fight would be a bitter one, that the State would be behind the mine owners, and that the Government would use the forces to crush the miners. We are unable, owing to lack of space, to dwell at sufficient length upon these documents. We will only say that the letters mentioned above, and the answers thereto given by responsible leaders of the General Council and of the Labour Party in the capitalist Press showed already in the month of August, 1925, that, among the organisations of the Labour movement, the Communist Party was the only one which foresaw not only the struggle ahead, but also its dimensions.

We wish to call special attention to the chairman's address at the August Conference of the Minority Movement, delivered by Tom Mann. This annual conference of the Minority Movement was declared to be a Preparedness Conference, and all the resolutions, and in particular the address of the Chairman, had one keynote: we are not ready, we are not prepared, and we must prepare. " I feel confident," said Tom Mann, " I may say without a moment's hesitancy that all present at this conference are fully determined to be prepared." If we compare this Conference of the Minority Movement with the Trades Union Congress which, as stated above, was permeated with the spirit of the victory of Red Friday, we will be perfectly justified in saying that, although the Scarboro' T.U.C. showed a more militant spirit than many other Congresses of the Trade Union movement, still it did not grasp

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the meaning and significance of the problems of the coming fight as was done by the Preparedness Conference of the Minority Movement.

The Government fully appreciated the situation existing inside the Labour movement. The leaders of the Communist Party and of the Minority Movement—in other words, those leaders who worked for preparedness—were arrested and sentenced to terms of imprisonment, one group to six months and the other to twelve.

On January 15, the Executive of the Communist Party tried to sum up the lessons of the first months of the "breathing space." We think that this statement deserves to be quoted at some length:—

> The present industrial situation and the crisis looming ahead fully justifies the Communist Party's warning to the workers that the Capitalist Class is determined to return to the offensive, on an even more gigantic scale than last July.
>
> The Miners, after the breathing space bought for the owners by the means of a subsidy, and the sham impartiality of the Coal Commission, are now threatened with an open attack on the seven-hour day, on the Miners' Federation and on wages.
>
> The owners have thrown disguise to the winds.
>
> The attack on the miners is the most violent and unashamed; but workers in most of the industries are faced with similar attacks.
>
> The railwaymen are threatened with wage cuts: the engineers with longer hours: the builders with abolition of craft control won by years of sacrifice.
>
> Coupled with this, nearly two million workers remain unemployed. By artificial and brutal administrative restrictions, thousands have been struck off the register and refused unemployment benefit. They have become completely dependent on the Poor Law authorities, and the crushing burden of maintaining this huge army of reserve workers against possible strikes or lockouts falls entirely upon local taxation.
>
> These facts, taken together with the steady, if unobtrusive organisation of the O.M.S., point to a definite determination on the part of the British capitalists to prevent a repetition of Red Friday, to challenge the organised labour movement and smash it, and to drive the workers down to coolie conditions. By this means they hope to achieve the impossible task of stabilising their system, undermined by war, ruin of foreign markets, chaos in production, and hideous exploitation of colonial workers.
>
> The struggle now opening is of a magnitude hitherto unknown. But this enlarged meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party believes that the workers can meet the capitalist attack and smash it, as on Red Friday.

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> More: we believe that the British Workers can turn their defensive into an offensive, and present a common demand for better conditions which will be the prelude to a complete victory over the capitalists . . .

At the same time the Minority Movement organised a special conference called the Conference of Action, which was held on March 20, 1926. This Conference of Action was responsible for two important things. In the first place, it was the first great rank and file assembly which exposed correctly the work and the findings of the Royal Commission headed by Sir Herbert Samuel. Secondly, this Conference outlined a concrete plan of action, based upon the organisations of pit and factory committees on the one hand, and councils of action in each locality on the other.

The stand taken towards the Samuel Royal Commission deserves special attention. It is a well-established fact that the dominant classes use the instrument of courts of inquiry, royal commissions, and so on for the sole purpose of stemming the development of the class struggle. The Coal Commission appointed after Red Friday had a very delicate problem before it. It was called upon to persuade the workers that it was the business of the miners to pay, by the lowering of their standards, for the mismanagement of the mines by the coal owners. The Baldwin Government found the right men to do this delicate job. The Commission drew up a long report in which the pill the miners were expected to swallow was well sugared.

It is somewhat difficult to believe that the leaders of the Labour Party and of the General Council did not understand the real meaning of the Royal Commission's Report. The situation was wonderfully clear. The miners were in a fighting mood; there was a fine spirit of solidarity among the other workers. The dominant classes arranged a well-disguised division of work: while the mine owners were demanding longer hours and lower wages the Government Commission talked only about lower wages. The intention of the ruling classes was to prevent a conflict and to persuade the miners to "face the economic facts," namely to pay for the mismanagement of the mines. Had the Government succeeded in this plan, it would have been easy for them to introduce later the Eight-Hour Bill as a measure against too drastic cuts in wages. It was as clear as daylight that the duty of every

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honest trade unionist, of every honest Labour man, was to fight against the subterfuge under cover of which wage reductions and longer hours were looming.

And yet, the leaders of the Labour Party and the General Council came out immediately in praise of this Report with the definite purpose of helping the Government to avoid a fight and to secure the submission of the miners without any special efforts. There was a moment when a section of the Miners' leaders was influenced by the agitation of the Trade Union and Labour leaders in favour of the Samuel Report. But eventually the miners refused to accept the Report. During this stage of the struggle the Communist Party was undoubtedly the only one organisation which took the correct line and gave the miners the right lead, exposing the real intentions of the Report of the Royal Commission.[1] We call attention to the appeal issued by the Communist Party to the delegates to the Miners' Conference held on March 12, which deals specially with the Royal Commission's Report. The most important points of this appeal are: (a) The Samuel Commission paves the way for the coal owners' victory; (b) Lower wages mean famine wages; (c) Increased production will worsen the conditions of the miners; (d) Longer hours will add more than 100,000 to the unemployed; (e) The promised trade revival is a fallacy—that the decline of British capitalism cannot be stopped at the expense of the workers.

On March 19, the Communist Party published another statement on the Report of the Coal Commission, which is practically an analysis of all the items included in the Report. There is, however, one point in this statement which, in our opinion, should be criticised. The statement ends with an appeal for a united front of all workers under the direction of the General Council of the Trades Union Congress. This statement appeared after the Conference of Action of the Minority Movement, at which it was decided to instruct the Executive of the Minority Movement to create an enlarged Advisory Board. The only political meaning which can be placed on that decision is that the Minority Movement, and also the Communist Party, were already afraid at that

[1] Later the Labour Research Department published a detailed analysis of the Samuel Report—*The Coal Crisis*.

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time that at the critical hour the leadership of the Trades Union Congress might fail, and for that reason it was necessary to have a responsible body which would endeavour to save the movement from a debacle. If this interpretation is correct, it would have been politically wiser if, in the statement which dealt with the Coal Report, the Communist Party had warned the workers against the vacillations of the General Council and the readiness of some of the leaders of that body to accept the findings of the Samuel Report.

One month later the Communist Party issued a call which is of no less significance than the documents dealing with the Coal Commission's Report. We refer to the " Call to Miners, Engineers, and Railwaymen " printed in the *Workers' Weekly* of April 23. In that appeal, the General Council is urged to (1) convene a conference of all Trade Union Executives to support the miners, by a general strike if necessary; (2) to set up a strike commissariat in conjunction with the C.W.S.; and (3) to organise international support for the miners. This call leaves no room for doubt that the Communist Party foresaw clearly the character of the coming fight and understood the measures which should be taken to meet it. It is important for another reason. It indicated *the necessity of combining the fight of the miners with the demands of the metal workers and the railwaymen.*

The Communist Party already saw very clearly the danger of betrayal, although we believe that this danger was not sufficiently stressed. In the call to the Special Conference of Trade Union Executives which began on April 29, the Communist Party reminded the delegates to that Conference that class co-operation produced Black Friday, and that working-class solidarity produced Red Friday. The same idea is expressed in the May Day Manifesto of the Party. That manifesto contains an appeal to the workers not to be misled by lying talk of reconcilation between classes, of social and industrial peace, and among the slogans there is a warning against traitor leaders.

The feelings of the Communist Party on the danger of treason found still stronger expression in the statement issued by the Central Committee of the Party, which was published in the

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Sunday Worker of May 2. We consider this statement of such great importance as to be worth while to quote in full:—

> For nine months the Communist Party has been warning the workers that the mine-owners and their Government intended to attack the miners, and through them the whole working class. The Right Wing in the trade unions and the Labour Party has sneered at these warnings, and deliberately neglected to make adequate preparations. The events of the last few days have shown conclusively that the Communist Party was right.
>
> The supreme need of the moment is solidarity between all sections of organised labour. The greatest danger to the workers to-day is that the Government and the Right Wing may succeed in isolating the miners from the rest of the movement by obscuring the real issues at stake, namely, that whatever reorganisation of the coal industry is needed, the miners shall not be forced to accept lower wages, longer hours, or district agreements.
>
> During the negotiations the Government has done its utmost to trap the miners into unreservedly accepting the Commission's Report as a basis for discussion, and abandoning their resistance to its unashamed proposals for lowering their standard of life. This would be fatal, not only for the miners, but for all workers. Therefore, every working-class organisation must tell the capitalists plainly that the miners' declaration on wages, hours and national agreements, repeatedly endorsed by the General Council, are the minimum basis of any agreement whatsoever
>
> Further, the Communist Party reminds the workers that the Government fears action, not words. The General Council's request for power to call out every industry will not move the Government unless the resolution is accompanied by action. Such action can only be an immediate embargo on transport of coal or blacklegs, and a stoppage of the lying capitalist Press.
>
> The Communist Party urges every member of the working class to do his utmost, in the next few days, to mobilise the workers in every locality around the Trades Council, vested with full authority as a Council of Action to press for the creation of a Workers' Defence Corps and a commissariat department jointly with the local Co-operative and to demand that the General Council shall immediately summon an International Conference of all trade union organisations to prevent blacklegging and secure co-ordinated action in defence of the miners.

It is rather unfortunate that this danger of betrayal was not sufficiently stressed after the General Strike began. The editorial of the *Daily Herald* of May 3 was very symptomatic. The *Daily Herald* informed the workers that all the leaders were acting as a unit; that all old feuds were forgotten. It was absolutely essential to have opposed to the slogan of the *Daily Herald:* Trust your

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Leaders—the slogan which the Communist Party issued much later—Trust the Workers and Watch the Leaders!

It is quite obvious that during the days of the General Strike, when millions of workers came out to fight the cause of Labour against the Government, the Communist Party believed that the General Council would not dare to betray such a magnificent fight. It is a fact that, even after Baldwin made it perfectly clear in the House of Commons that the representatives of the T.U.C. were prepared to discuss the formula drafted by Birkenhead, which definitely mentioned wage reductions, the *Workers' Bulletin* (the official organ of the Communist Party during the period of the General Strike) of May 7 expressed the hope that the leaders of the General Council would frankly admit that they had made a mistake, and that they would stand solidly by the miners' slogans.

This was undoubtedly a serious mistake. It is the more surprising that this mistake was made in view of the pronouncement of the Communist Party in the *Workers' Bulletin* of May 5. That pronouncement made it absolutely clear that the miners' fight was a political fight, and that it was necessary to add to the slogans of the miners, the general slogan for all the workers for the formation of a Labour Government. The Communist Party knew at that time that the General Council was trying its very best to act constitutionally, which meant in practice to narrow the extension of the fight and to prepare its defeat. While the Communist Party should be complimented on the slogans formulated on May 5, it should, in our opinion, be criticised for the comment made on the statement of Mr. Baldwin, referred to above.

It must also be pointed out that the sound idea formulated in the call to miners, engineers, and railwaymen, referred to above, was not brought forward during the General Strike, when it was especially important to transform the fight for the support of the miners into a general offensive against the capitalists. We still believe that, if a lead had been given to the engineers, to the railwaymen, to the transport workers, to formulate their demands, and to unite with the miners in a campaign for the defence of the workers' standards, the betrayal of the strike would have been much more difficult.

While the Communist Party did not do all it should have done to

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warn the workers against betrayal and to make betrayal impossible it must be added that that Party was the first to tell the truth about the surrender of May 12. On the day of May 12, the Communist Party of Great Britain sent a telegram to its district organisations qualifying the calling off of the strike as a treachery not only in relation to the miners but to all workers. In that short telegram the Communist Party also practically summed up the action of the two wings of the General Council in the following words: "While the Right Wing of the General Council and of the Labour Party has exhibited utmost energy the Left Wing has tolerated defeatist agitation and not protested against this treacherous decision."[2]

After the calling off of the general strike, this small Party threw all its weight and energies into the miners' dispute, considering the securing of victory for the miners to be the paramount issue of the Labour movement as a whole, and of the Party itself in particular. A careful study of all documents relating to the activities of the Communist Party during the miners' fight leads us to the conclusion that the Communist Party was fully justified in the message it issued to the miners after they were starved into submission, and that it is the only organisation which has the right to say with pride to the miners:—

> Comrades, whatever you may think of Communist policy in general, you will not deny the great services rendered by the Communist Party in consolidating your struggle. At every point of the struggle, from the Samuel memorandum, through the bishops' terms to the last offer of the Government, the Communist Party not only fought by your side, not only fought to induce the rest of the Labour Movement to come to your help, but expressed your point of view better than your official organisation itself.
>
> —*Workers' Weekly*, December 10, 1926.

The general strike began three days after the miners were locked out, and was called off some six months before the miners' fight was brought to a close. The workers who participated in the general strike considered that they were out to defend the miners' standards; the miners, fighting the mine owners and the

[2] These extracts, as many others quoted in this article, are taken from *The General Strike: Its Origin and History* by R. Page Arnot, a proof of which we have had the privilege to see, and which will be published shortly by the Labour Research Department.

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Government, proudly and rightly thought that they were defending the cause of Labour in general. Nevertheless, these two great events in the history of the working class must be treated separately.

One cannot but agree with the estimate of the general strike as summed up in the *Workers' Weekly* of June 4, that it was the high-water mark of British working-class resistance to the lowering of standards. But it was something still bigger and more important. It was the first time in the history of Labour when all the walls which had been artificially built up between workers of different crafts and of different industries were burnt down in the great fire of working-class solidarity. The workers came together as a unit. They fought as a class. That is why the general strike, in spite of its bad leadership and final betrayal, revealed the great power and force of the workers.

The consolidation of the workers in the strike led also to the consolidation of the old Trade Union bureaucracy against the strike. Those who regarded themselves as "left" in the days of July, 1925, became frightened when the general strike threatened to become a great struggle between class and class. The cleavage between right and left in the General Council, as in the upper strata of the Trade Union bureaucracy in general, disappeared.[3]

During the strike the bureaucracy tried to combine class co-operation and class struggle. While issuing open appeals to the workers to stand united (see the *British Worker* day after day) they continued *secret* negotiations with representatives of the dominant classes. Such a double game could not last for long. The leaders of the General Council, under the guidance of the leaders of the Labour Party, had to choose one way or another. The strike developed, gaining strength and power every hour;

[3] In order to avoid any misunderstanding, we want to make it clear that wherever we refer in this article to the Left Wing, we do not include either those rank and file members of the Labour Party and of the Trade Unions who are disgusted with the liberal policy of their leaders, and who consider themselves Left Wingers, or that part of the movement which is organised in the Left Wing National Movement. We refer solely to those so-called Left Wingers who adapt themselves in phraseology to the fighting mood of the workers, while remaining a part of the liberal bureaucratic machine. Some of these so-called Left Wingers occupy high positions in the General Council and in the Labour Party. Their political function is mainly to strengthen the hands of Thomas and MacDonald inside the Labour Party and the Trade Unions.

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the negotiations were producing no results, and when the opportunity came, they clutched at the Samuel Memorandum, which everyone knows was simply a repetition of the Samuel Report (see the confessions of Sir Herbert Samuel in *The Times* of December 10) and behind which there was no power or authority, in order to call off the strike.

We are now able to refer to a careful selection of documents published by the Labour Research Department (see *The General Strike, May*, 1926: *Trades Councils in Action*, by Emile Burns), which prove convincingly that on May 12, *i.e.*, when the strike was called off, there was no signs of any weakening among the workers. On the contrary, the strike was developing and becoming a real great power, and it was for that reason that the General Council called it off.

We must say quite frankly that for a long time the lessons of the general strike were not brought home to their fullest extent even in the literature of the Communist Party.

In the article referred to above, published in the *Workers' Weekly* of June 4, we read: "This strike (the general strike) was broken not by the power of the capitalist class, but by the failure of the Right Wing leadership." The pamphlet published by the C.P.—*The Reds and the General Strike*—which brings home many lessons of the nine days, also speaks only about the crimes of the Right Wing leadership. Only later, much later, the Communist Party formulated strongly and clearly the great change in the relations of forces inside the Labour Movement brought about by the general strike. That change consisted in the consolidation of the bureaucracy—Right and Left, against the consolidation of the workers.

The general strike revealed another great possibility, namely, the consolidation of the workers for a *political* fight against the Baldwin Government. The by-elections following the general strike showed quite clearly that there was a great development of the political consciousness of the workers. The Communist Party was the only Party in Great Britain which explained the meaning of the general strike while the general strike was still on. A perusal of the appeals, manifestos, &c., issued by this Party shows, however, that for a long period it did not take up

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the slogan of a Labour Government, which the Party itself had formulated during the strike.

The leaders of the Communist Party would probably tell us that the Party threw all its energy into trying to prevent the isolation of the miners, and that they therefore concentrated on the slogans of the embargo and a levy on all workers, and upon the consolidation of the miners themselves. This work was undoubtedly to the greatest credit of the Communist Party, and we are quite convinced that as a result of these activities the Party succeeded in doubling its membership. Still we think that a clear explanation of the relations of the forces inside the Labour Movement was absolutely essential, even with a view to strengthening the miners in their fight. To make this point perfectly clear, we are of the opinion that it was necessary to explain to the workers that the fight was a political fight and that neither the embargo nor the levy could be carried through the old bureaucracy, but in spite of it.

We also know that for a certain amount of time the Communist Party regarded with some suspicion the slogan—dissolution of the Baldwin Parliament. They saw quite clearly that this slogan was put forward by the I.L.P. in order to cover their retreat from the slogans of the embargo and the levy. We share the view of the Communist Party with regard to the I.L.P. slogan. Nevertheless, we believe that the best way to have fought this measure of the I.L.P. was to combine the slogans of the embargo and levy with that of the dissolution of Parliament.

We have enumerated some of the acts and omissions of the Communist Party which we consider as mistakes. We do this at the same time knowing perfectly well that many of the mistakes mentioned were afterwards not only admitted, but, where possible, rectified by the Party. Nevertheless, we think that they should be carefully studied. We accept unreservedly the contention of Marx that self-criticism is one of the strongest weapons of the workers in their fight for emancipation. Let those who preach continuity of capitalist policy occupy themselves with window dressing. Sincere working-class fighters should never be afraid of acknowledging omissions and mistakes.

Now let us try to analyse the activities of the Communist

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Party during the miners' fight. Before we come to this, however, we want only to mention that among the documents relating to the General Strike which are of the first importance we include the statement of the General Council of the Russian Trade Unions on the lessons of the general strike. This document produced some hot blood in the relations between the British General Council and the Russian General Council. This conflict has not yet ended. It would appear that, just as the Baldwin Government is trying to introduce legislation aimed at preventing a repetition of the general strike, so the General Council in its turn is trying to "legislate" in a way as to make such "interference" as that mentioned above impossible. For our part, we welcome this interference. We only want to remind the patriots of continuity that the dominant classes of Great Britain played a decisive part in world politics for the simple reason that they were the first to carry through the capitalist industrial revolution. The Russian workers play, and will play, a leading active part in working-class politics for the reason that they were the first to carry through the working-class revolution.

Now let us come back to the activities of the Communist Party during the miners' fight.

From the day when the general strike was called off to the day when Lord Birkenhead had a chance to speak in the name of the Government about "our victory"—in the middle of December—the Communist Party did not stop for a second to popularise and to defend the idea of an embargo on blackleg coal and a levy on all workers. It may be argued that neither of these slogans actually materialised. This is quite true. The organised bureaucracy of the Labour Movement proved itself stronger than the Communist Party. It cannot be disputed, however, that this campaign had a very great effect. It focussed the attention of the workers to the miners' fight. The miners felt that the rank and file were with them in their struggle, and this was a source of courage to the miners and gave them confidence to continue the struggle. To this we want to add that the Conference of Trade Union Executives held at the beginning of November, which, although only half-heartedly, declared itself in favour of a voluntary levy, should be honestly considered as the achievement of the

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Communist Party propaganda. The importance of the activities of the Communist Party will be better understood if we study the critical moments in the history of the great fight.

It was at the end of June when the leaders of the miners first revealed their weakness. We refer to the agreement concluded between the General Council and the Miners' Executive to postpone the conference called for June 25, which was supposed not only to thrash out the lessons of the general strike, but also to organise the support of the workers for the miners. We understand perfectly well why the General Council was anxious to postpone this Conference. June 25 was not far from May 12, and the workers might well still remember the nightmare of that tragic day. But why did the miners' leaders agree to this postponement? There is no doubt that a section of the Miners' Executive hoped that at least the postponement of the conference would result in a greater measure of support from the General Council. They could not understand that the General Council was first and foremost interested in the defeat of the miners, and not in their victory. There was, however, another section of the leadership which was in sympathy with the leadership of the General Council, and was prepared to follow that lead.

In the *Workers' Weekly* of July 2, that is, the first issue after the Conference was called off, the Communist Party came out with a clear explanation: "Why was the Conference called off?" In that statement the Communist Party stated that the miners' leaders had made a mistake:

> They (the miners' leaders) have enabled the Right Wing leaders to hide their real faces from the workers a little longer; they have enabled the Left Wing leaders to go a little longer without declaring once for all where they stand; they have won no permanent advantage either for the miners or for the workers generally, and they have placed themselves at the mercy of the General Council in any manœuvre it may undertake in pursuance of its settled policy of forcing wage reductions on the workers.

This statement, as nearly all the statements of the Communist Party for this period, finished up with an appeal for an embargo and a levy on all workers.

The second critical moment is connected with the bishops' proposals. Those who declare that Cook and the Communist Party followed the same policy during all the phases of the struggle

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are doing an injustice to both of them. It is a fact—it does not matter whether we like it or not—that in July, when Cook and his colleagues persuaded themselves that they would get nothing from the agreement with the General Council, the general feeling among the miners' leaders, including Cook, was that the bishops' proposals should be accepted. And they came out openly in favour of them. Those who want to blame them or criticise them for this undoubted blunder must remember that the bishops' proposals were praised by all our Labour leaders—the Right and so-called Left—and that at that time the coalition of all the reactionary forces against the miners was already well at work. The Communist Party was the only organisation (we must again remind the reader that the Minority Movement accepted the lead of the Communist Party in all the stages of the fight) which warned the miners that the memorandum of the church dignitaries had the same purpose as the famous Samuel Memorandum, namely, to prepare the retreat of the miners. We would like to quote the following sentence from the Communist Party statement on the bishops' proposals:—

> The Communist Party reminds A. J. Cook and Herbert Smith that their ambiguous statements implying a readiness to accept wage reductions only encourages the capitalists *to renew their campaign to trap the miners into surrender* (our italics). Their prime duty at the moment is to devote all their time to a campaign for the embargo.

On August 22, the Central Committee of the Communist Party congratulated the miners on their historic struggle, emphasising the fact that partial surrender would not placate Baldwin and the coalowners. We believe that the Communist Party in its turn deserves to be congratulated on the results of its campaign against the bishops' proposals.

The longer the struggle continued, the greater became the energy of the Communist Party in the coalfields and in the great industrial centres. At the beginning of October the position of the miners began to worsen day by day. We have so far mentioned only two critical periods in the struggle—the agreement with the General Council and the bishops' proposals. To these it is necessary to add a third—the Churchill-MacDonald proposals, the object of which was to open the mines on the terms of the mineowners. And, in fact, the mines were partially opened.

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At that time the Communist Party came out with a clear fighting programme which was later accepted first by the South Wales Miners' Federation, and then became the programme of the whole of the Miners' Federation. The following is the South Wales Resolution:—

South Wales Resolution

That we revert to the *status quo* conditions. In order to obtain this the policy of the Miners' Federation of Great Britain on the following items to be:—

(1) Safety Men.—All such to be withdrawn from every colliery.
(2) Embargo.—That we urge this on all foreign-produced coal.
(3) Outcrops.—That the Miners' Federation of Great Britain immediately order the cessation of this practice.
(4) Levy.—That a special congress of the Trade Unions be called specifically to deal with this matter.
(5) Propaganda.—(a) That we send speakers to all black areas; (b) That the Labour Members of Parliament be marshalled for a nation-wide campaign.

In the event of any or all of these proposals becoming the National policy, that central control of the operations be in the Miners' Federation of Great Britain Executive Committee, who shall direct them to the supercession of local barriers where necessary.

Although the Miners' Federation accepted the South Wales programme, still it is an open secret that, with the exception of Cook and a few of his nearest colleagues, the Federation as such showed no great enthusiasm to carry through that programme. On the contrary, although the South Wales programme was never reconsidered and remained in force, the first November delegate conference of the miners dared to recommend the acceptance of the Government proposals, which were practically the proposals of the mineowners. Who conducted the fight against these outrageous proposals of the Government? Only the Communist Party. And if the workers throughout the world may feel proud of the fact that in the twenty-ninth week of the lock-out hundreds of thousands of miners had the courage to vote against surrender proposals, the Communist Party has a right to claim its share in this historic decision, which will never be forgotten in our annals.

It is true that this momentous decision was never carried through by the miners' leaders. Instead they chose to liquidate the fight. Still the far-reaching result of this vote can be observed,

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first in the fact that the Federation as such refused to sanction the conditions on which the workers were returning to work, and secondly, in the mood of the workers themselves. The miners declare, We are defeated, but not broken. The Federation declared that the conditions were imposed and not agreed to. In such circumstances, it is quite possible to rebuild a new strong united union which will be capable of converting the defeat into a great victory.

In discussing the activities of the Communist Party during the miners' lock-out, we dealt mainly with *the policy* of the Party. We must add that the part played by the Communist rank and file during the lock-out is illustrated in the way Communists are being singled out by the coalowners on the question of reinstatement. (It should also be remembered that well over 1,000 members of the Communist Party were imprisoned under E.P.A., and many of them are still in gaol.) It is an open secret that in all collieries, even in the most remote parts of the country, the Communists are the first to be victimised and the last to remain at their posts. The owners are acting thus knowing that the Communists would be and will be the first to renew the fight, as they were in the front ranks of the miners' army during the fight, which is now at its close.

We say at its close advisedly, because the fight is not yet finished. Hundreds of thousands of miners are still out of work. Guerilla fights are taking place in every part of the country, and again in these guerilla fights the Communists play a very active part.

The rank and file and the leaders of this small Party acted as a unit. In March seven of the twelve Communist leaders arrested after the Liverpool Conference of the Labour Party were released. Their first word was that they would devote all their energy to the miners' fight. They kept their word both during the general strike and the miners' lock-out. In September the second group, who had been serving a sentence of twelve months, were released. Joynson-Hicks watched them carefully, trying to prevent them from being active in the coalfields. He did not succeed. Together with all other Communists, they were at their fighting posts.

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We have given only a short and concise statement about the part played by the Communist Party during the recent great struggle. The conclusion which must be drawn from a close survey of the activities of the Communist Party during this eventful epoch is that there is a new strong force in the Labour Movement which gives us the right to believe that the sacrifices of the great battles of the last seven months will not be lost, and that the working class, which has become ripe for a great march forward, has already a Party which is capable of undertaking the leadership of that advance.

The Communist Party was and remains an integral part of the Labour Movement. We have every reason to believe that the efforts of the present leaders of the Labour Party to make that Party safe for Liberalism, will fail. The rank and file will see that, not only the Communist Party shall not be kept out of the Labour Party, but that it will play the part in shaping the policies of the Labour Movement that it deserves to play.

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The MINERS' STRUGGLE AND INTERNATIONAL UNITY

By R. PAGE ARNOT

THE miners' struggle opens a new chapter for the working class of Great Britain—so much is known. What is not realised is that it also writes *finis* to every previous chapter whatever the subject matter. One illusion after another has now been stripped away by the miners' struggle.

One long chapter was the first campaign for International Trade Union Unity. As a development of the United Front put forward in December, 1921, there came the gradual progress towards the campaign for International Trade Union Unity. Then, in the autumn of 1924, that campaign began ; it proceeded apace ; it met with enormous difficulties ; bit by bit those difficulties seemed harder and harder, but still appeared surmountable. Suddenly, in the first fortnight of May, 1926, they began to appear insurmountable. The process ran quickly through this last summer. The officials stood by to unloose the official bonds and were only restrained by the fear of its effect upon the masses.

Now that those bonds are almost unloosed, now that the General Council are seeking to cripple or stop the Anglo-Russian Unity Committee, it might seem that the campaign has completely failed and that we are back at the position of two and a-half years ago ; or rather that we were much further back, because there is now no question of such developments towards International Trade Union Unity as in the 1924-25 manner. But it would be the greatest possible mistake to think that we are " back again " in 1924. History does not go for a stroll and come back in the evening ; history marches on, and a stage once reached is never exactly repeated.

No doubt the gentlemen of Amsterdam feel that they have won a great victory or, rather, that a great victory has been won for them. But they are much mistaken if they think so ; and even they

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do not imagine that the agitation of 1925-26 can have taken place without leaving an abiding effect upon the masses of workers.

Let us recall first the purposes of international trade union unity—the situation in which it arose—the effect it was bound to have upon the workers in each country—the resistance it was bound to evoke from the capitalists and the lackeys of the capitalists.

The purpose of International Trade Union Unity was clear from the beginning. It was to unite on the basis of their common struggle against the capitalists the organised workers of every country in the world. It was thus the preliminary to a successful resistance of the workers against the capitalist attacks. These attacks took many forms, of which the most obvious were :—

(1) The increasing drive for reduction of wages, lengthening of hours, and disintegration of trade unionism;

(2) The operation of the Dawes Plan in Germany, the gold standard deflation in Britain, the move for the revalorisation of the franc in France;

(3) The drive against the Colonial peoples in order to keep China, India and the other countries safe for overseas investments;

(4) The move (initiated from Downing Street) to unite the States of Western Europe against the U.S.S.R.—the Workers' Republics.

These attacks it was clear would be brought to naught if those attacked were to form up in one united resistance. If the Chinese trade unionists and the Russian trade unionists and the Indian trade unionists and the British trade unionists stood together, and if with them the trade unionists of France, Germany, Belgium, Holland and America were able to heal their internal divisions, then the whole attack that was being prepared (which the capitalists themselves called "the process of stabilisation") would be prepared in vain.

This was more immediately obvious to the capitalists than it was to the workers. Scarcely had Trade Union Unity been mentioned than they launched a campaign against it, and threw into the struggle not only the terrible columns of the capitalist Press, but also the Social Democratic Press, the bureaucracy of the trade unions of Western Europe and lastly the body which had served them better than any other in the last ten years in making divisions within the Labour Movement and carrying the capitalist policy through the ranks of the workers, viz., the leaders of the Second International (Vandervelde and company).

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The Russian and British trade union leaders had a stiff task before them to fight and to break all these forces. But on their side they had the fact that they were fighting for a cause which was bound to prevail in that it attracted battalion after battalion of ordinary workers in the ranks of the Trade Unions, whose leaders alone were so opposed to unity. They were bound to win because they had the workers on their side. They were bound to win—provided they remained true to the workers and the cause they had taken up.

With the visit of the Trade Union Delegation to Russia and the agreement there made for an Anglo-Russian Unity Committee, and the subsequent ratification of that Agreement in the spring of 1925, a beginning was made. For six months thereafter the campaign went ahead briskly enough—though a close observer might have seen even then curious signs of hesitation—but after the Scarborough Trades Union Congress in September, 1925, the campaign, which should have been speeded up in view of the unanimous acceptance by the Congress of the General Council's policy, began to be mysteriously slowed down. There was sand in the bearings. Into this it is not necessary to go in detail. It suffices to say that the same General Council that could not take the slightest step to prepare for the terrible struggle that was to confront the Trade Union movement at the end of April could not logically be expected to go rapidly ahead with working-class preparation on an international scale.

All that was done was done in the direction of preserving a surface amity with Soviet Russia while at the same time an accommodation attitude towards Amsterdam was displayed. In short, for the last eighteen months, at a time when the workers were finding the realities of their life grimmer and grimmer, the General Council, instead of determinedly carrying through the campaign for international trade union unity in conjunction with the leaders of the Russian Trade Unions, has been acting a delightful play adapted from Bunyan's *Mr. Facing-Both-Ways* in which it reserved to itself the title role.

We have now to trace as clearly as may be the steps by which the General Council reverted to the attitude of opposition to International Trade Union Unity—from May right on to

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November. It is the miners' struggle which sweeps away the drama and makes the reality clear. Let us see what help the miners had during their struggle from the professors of international trade union unity.

On June 7 the Central Council of the Soviet Trade Unions published a statement on the general strike in which it exercised its right of friendly criticism. Three main facts were before it. First, the insulting refusal of their fraternal offer of help. Secondly, the breakdown of May 12, including the damning verbatim report of the interview between the General Council representatives and the Prime Minister. Thirdly, the decision of the miners to continue the fight and their welcome acceptance of the help that had originally been offered to the workers through the General Council. In their published statement the Central Council of the Russian Trade Unions were not withheld by any trumpery considerations of surface *bonhomie*, or acquaintance with individuals, from stating in a clear manner their definite opinion of the policy pursued by the General Council. At once our General Council were insulted. What right had outsiders, foreigners, to criticise the British Trade Unionists? It was clear that they did not for a moment imagine that it was not only the right, but the bounden duty, of the representatives of one working class to lend not only their friendly aid but their friendly fraternal criticism; fraternal, however sharply it might be necessary to express it in the case where another movement had been before the world so obviously misled by its representatives. No immediate action was taken, but the members of the General Council were angry, and nursed their wrath to keep it warm.

Meantime, the miners had not only accepted gladly the aid of their fellow Trade Unionists that had been spurned by the General Council, but began to press for an early meeting of the Anglo-Russian Unity Committee in order that they should receive therefrom such further aid as could be devised. Eventually a meeting was held at Paris on July 30 and 31, 1926. This, it should be noted, was the first meeting that had been held since the beginning of December, 1925. The Soviet Trade Unionists at once proposed that the meeting should be devoted to helping the miners. The British Trade Unionists insisted that the first item

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must be a withdrawal of the June 7 statement of the Soviet Trade Unionists. The General Council thus showed themselves sticklers for etiquette at a very curious moment. The miners were in the direst need. The meeting of the Anglo-Russian Unity Committee, however, was not to be permitted to deal with the needs of the miners until this question of withdrawal had been fully discussed. The result of the meeting was a deadlock.

A further meeting was held at the end of August in Berlin. This time the Soviet Trade Union delegation definitely put down the question of helping the English miners as the first and most important point to be discussed.

It was now the sixteenth week of the lock-out. They tabled a definite series of proposals for concrete support for the miners. The meeting went on for two days. The General Council of the British Trades Union Congress at first refused to discuss the question of the miners, and, when at last they were pressed to make some declaration on the concrete proposals put forward, stated that everything suggested for helping the British miners had already been done. Throughout the account of this meeting there is obviously an attitude of resentment at the idea of other Trade Unionists meddling with British affairs. It is clear that here we have the whelps of the old British Lion roaring in the manner of their sire.

Finally, the Soviet Trade Unionists and the British Trade Unionists at this meeting of the Anglo-Russian Committee agreed to recommend to their respective General Councils proposals for a full discussion of outstanding matters within one month.

It was now within two weeks of the Bournemouth Trades Union Congress. This year again, M. Tomsky, the Chairman of the Russian Trades Union Congress, was to have been the fraternal delegate to Bournemouth. His visa was refused by the British Foreign Office at the instance of Joynson-Hicks. This insult to the working class of Great Britain was not swallowed by the General Council without a formal protest being made, but the hollow nature of the protest was shown by the fact that the General Council prevented the Congress from ratifying and reinforcing it.

The capitalist Press, which seems during the past two years to be very close to right-wing sources of information about the doings

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and thinkings of the General Council, stated that the members were relieved at Jix's decision. They did not state that the members of the General Council had approached Jix to ask him to prevent Tomsky's coming ; and it would not have been true to say so. But according to them Jix's decision was a relief to the General Council, and their protest was very obviously a *pro forma* protest. The atmosphere was not one of Anglo-Russian Unity, but of collusion between the Trades Union Congress General Council and the Tory Government against the miners and against all the aid or comfort the miners might get from Tomsky's speech as fraternal delegate.

The Soviet Trade Unionists, however, have had a long experience (both before and after the revolution) of attempted suppressions by Governments with or without the collusion of the reformists within the Labour Movement. Somehow or other, they wished the British workers to know their opinion. A letter was sent in the name of Michail Tomsky to the Bournemouth Trades Union Congress, conveying the greetings of the Soviet Trade Union Central Council. In the course of this letter they said :—

> We may be accused of being too sharp, but when it comes to choosing between empty compliments (which mean nothing) to leaders, and the service of the working masses, we will always choose the latter. These are the dictates of our working-class conscience and our bounden proletarian duty. If we Soviet workers held it to be necessary to do everything possible to extend brotherly material aid, we clearly believe it to be our proletarian duty to extend our moral aid.

The letter had begun by greeting the miners and hoping that the Congress would make it its first business to help those miners. After the passage quoted above, the letter went on to deal with the question of aid, and in the course of this, frankly, but without any offensive language, criticised the General Council. The letter ended by announcing the decision to allocate a further 3,000,000 roubles for the benefit of the miners on the basis of a 1 per cent. voluntary levy of workers in the Soviet Union, and finally said :—

> Proletarian solidarity is displayed only in deeds. Just as the proletarians of over a hundred nationalities inhabiting the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics helped each other in their struggle, so our whole proletariat considers it is fraternal duty to help their British brother-workers in this their critical hour. We are firmly convinced that, in our hour of trial, the British proletariat will do

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> the same by us. More than once it has withheld the mailed fist of the British bourgeoisie hanging over our Workers' State. Thus will grow and strengthen brotherly bonds between the toilers of both countries, bonds that will become a tower of strength when in Britain the real Workers' Government, whose advent is inevitable, is formed.
>
> We strongly believe that the Trades Union Congress will do everything possible to consolidate further the Anglo-Russian Committee—the symbol of International Trade Union Unity, the symbol of the brotherly bonds which exist between the British and Soviet workers.
>
> Long live International working-class solidarity!
>
> Up the fight against the capitalist offensive!

The letter was dated September 5. The reply of the General Council was issued on September 8, together with a copy of the Russian telegram. The General Council really replied in two ways : one was to print the message of the Russian Trade Unions in the semi-grammatical telegraphese in which long international communications are dispatched. By a piece of petty malignity they endeavoured to convey the impression of illiterate ravings on the part of the Russian Trade Unionists. It was no doubt considered a satisfactory revenge.

The second reply was a brief retort which ended by saying :—

> The General Council has no intentions of replying to this ill-instructed and presumptuous criticism. The General Council most emphatically asserts that it cannot permit the position of a fraternal delegate to be degraded into a tirade against representatives of the British movement and the fraternal delegates of other countries, nor of countenancing an intolerable interference in British trade union affairs.

This, of course, was the very language of Mr. Pecksniff. In Pecksniff, Charles Dickens portrayed that not uncommon type of Englishman who uses fine language to clothe mean feelings, and who was an adept at expressing envy, malice, and all uncharitableness in pompous, hypocritical language. As this is the regular language of the editorial columns of the newspapers, the Fleet Street journalists naturally hailed the reply of the General Council as " calm and dignified."

We now come to the Congress Debate on International Trade Union Unity. It will be recalled that the Anglo-Russian Unity Committee had met on September 17, 1925, at the time of the Scarborough Congress and again in Berlin on December 8 and 9, 1925, and that thereafter there had been a great gap until the

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quarrel-over-procedure meetings of Paris on July 31 and of Berlin at the end of August, 1926.

Not a single step, unless it were a step backward, had been taken on the question of International Trade Union Unity since December of 1925. The General Council's Report to Congress was remarkably curt and unenlightening. In the debate on the International Federation of Trade Unions and International Unity, Horner pointed out straightaway that the language of the General Council was such as

> to lead delegates into the belief that the British Trade Union Movement had never attempted any other than to secure association with the Russian Trade Union workers. That limited objective, which it was suggested in this report had been the idea of the British Trade Union Movement, was not correct. Some of them were perfectly well aware that it had become necessary to find some pretext or other for separation from an association which talked or acted in terms of deeds.
>
> All the delegates in this Congress, he believed, had been under the impression that the unity they aimed at with the Russian workers was merely intended to be a preliminary to unity with all the rest of the world's workers, whether they were dissident or Communist workers, or any other workers. There was not merely the problem of unity with Russia, but as miners his people during the period of this dispute had been face to face with the fact that on the Continent there were workers who were not associated with Amsterdam, and these workers they had found to be equally essential to them as those who were occupying membership inside the I.F.T.U., and when the British Trade Union Movement had been seeking to secure Trade Union unity it was not merely unity as between the I.F.T.U. and the Russians, it was, they believed, unity between those dissident elements whether in France, Belgium, Germany or Czecho-Slovakia, and those organised elements in the Eastern portion of the world.

Meantime, the General Council had considered the proposals jointly agreed to at the Berlin meeting of the Anglo-Russian Unity Committee ; had rejected them and had resolved " to defer all considerations of Anglo-Russian Unity questions for a period of three months." The formula is suspiciously like the House of Commons rejection formula " that the Bill be read this day six months," and no doubt there were enough Parliamentarians on the General Council to think of such a device. No doubt also they thought that another three weeks or another month would see the miners' lock-out finished.

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Mr. Purcell cannot be said to have replied satisfactorily to Mr. Horner in the contentions he brought forward, notably in his suggestions that "the Russians themselves should ease the situation."

Thus the General Council within a very short space had either itself or through its representatives :—

(1) Refused to discuss aid to the miners.
(2) Pretended that it had done all that could be done to help the miners.
(3) Decided to have no more truck with the Russian Trade Unionists for a period of at least three months.
(4) Sent a formal intimation of their regret, but privately, according to the papers, were relieved at the refusal of a visa to the fraternal delegate.
(5) Submitted a report which contained tendencious passages veering towards amity with Amsterdam and the Amsterdam ideals of separateness and sectionalism.
(6) In the debate, through their chief spokesman, showed a disposition to mark time and perhaps even to step backward.

Logically, they had to do these things, for the betrayal of the miners on May 12 and in the months that followed could not, in reason, be accompanied by non-betrayal of the miners on the international field and ardent support inside the Anglo-Russian Committee.

There remained little enough for the General Council to do. They had all but broken off the Anglo-Russian Unity Committee, the propaganda of Trade Union Unity had ceased, the campaign against the splits and disintegrations of the Trade Union movement had been dropped. The chieftains of Amsterdam could now carry on their policy of disunity once more—a policy which in practice means handing over the workers to the mercy of the employers.

Finally, the capitalist Press of Europe and the whole world could feel that it had in some way contributed to a victory for civilisation and that it had warded off the terrible danger of a Trade Union body whose scope would cover the world and whose membership would embrace British and Chinese, Indians and Russians, Americans and Africans, every section of every country.

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The Times in particular was pleased ; but true to its tradition felt it necessary to make assurance doubly sure. Its Congress editorials which had begun with such a fearful note now ended : " Still the Council and the Congress continue to pay lip-service to the idea of unity. Consistency and the normal dictates of self-respect require them to make a speedy end of the Anglo-Russian Committee."

But the General Council know how to do their own business better than *The Times* can advise them. A breach such as *The Times* suggests would at once be plain in its meaning to every worker and would arouse intense indignation. It would be an insult not merely to the largest body of Trade Unionists in the world, but also to the millions of miners and miners' wives and families by whom the Soviet Trade Unionists had stood so well. So the General Council will probably propose some means of maiming or crippling the functions of the Committee so that it will gradually die " a natural death." A sudden death is always suspicious.

But we may take leave to doubt whether the General Council will be successful in its plan of stifling the Anglo-Russian Unity Committee as part of its general tendency to " forget " about International Trade Union unity. The General Council may hold the machine—and it is a machine whose strength should not be underestimated—but they have lost their moral authority. And where the workers have lost faith in their leaders it will not be so easy to trick them or to destroy the fraternal bond that exists between the Soviet Trade Unionists and ourselves—a bond created not by committees, but by the help they gave the miners in the biggest struggle of British trade union history. It is on this basis that Trade Union unity now rests—a basis that cannot be shattered.

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IMPERIAL DEFENCE

By W. N. EWER

CLAUSEWITZ'S famous dictum that " war is a continuation of policy " is none the less true because it is trite. The problems of strategy and diplomacy are inextricably connected, for they are posed by precisely the same economic and political conditions. The work of a Foreign Office is necessarily linked with the work of the Defence Ministries. The same causes which created the Triple Entente created simultaneously the Committee of Imperial Defence and the Rosyth Dockyard.

So far as the British Empire is concerned the strategical and diplomatic problems of the moment are essentially defensive. Great Britain has in the past been a predatory and expansionist power. She will be so again if strength and opportunity serve. But for the moment she must concentrate on the retention and digestion of her existing possessions. She is unlikely in the near future to attempt aggression—which must not be confused with a tactical offensive—or annexation—unless for the purpose of consolidating defensive positions in a given area. Syria and Persia may be suggested as areas in which such a thing is possible.

The defence of the Empire falls immediately into two categories—defence against external enemies and defence against internal revolt. Of the two the former has become relatively less, the latter relatively more, important than before 1914.

Now the problems of defence against external enemies are determined by two sets of data—the things to be defended and the potential enemies against whom they are to be defended.

Of these the first may be classified as :—

(1) Great Britain and Ireland.
(2) The overseas territories.
(3) Essential lines of communication and trade routes.

Among potential enemies we do not need to include the whole of the sixty odd independent states of the world. There are among them many—indeed a great majority—with whom war is inconceivable (unless as a minor incident in a general conflagration). War with Czecho-slovakia or Paraguay is a physical impos-

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sibility. War with Denmark or Bulgaria is a political impossibility : for there are no discoverable causes of serious conflict.

Eliminating all these cases we find as potential enemies a baker's dozen of States of varying strength.

In Europe : France, Germany, Italy, the Soviet Union.

In Asia : Turkey, the Hedjaz, Persia, Afghanistan, Tibet, Siam, China, Japan.

In America : the United States.

Now of these, two may be eliminated again. A German war is, for the moment, out of the question for obvious reasons. An American war is equally excluded, for equally obvious reasons. In the one case, Germany is physically incapable of waging war against Great Britain ; in the other, Great Britain is economically incapable of waging war against the United States. Neither eventuality needs to be seriously considered by the military and naval experts.

Of the remaining eleven, France is in a category by itself. It is the only power which, from its geographical position, is capable of striking immediately at the centre of the Empire. A military invasion is probably as impossible as ever. But London is within easy striking distance of the French air squadrons ; every port and every trade route is within easy range of the French submarines. The experience of 1914-1918 is sufficient warning of the potentialities of an Anglo-French war. The prospect involves for both parties so tremendous a risk, such certainty of mutual destruction, that unless under the greatest provocation they dare not hazard it.

Therefore — apart from any other motive — the strategic position makes a continuation of the Anglo-French entente essential. That entente has been seriously strained on occasion since the war. The very fact that it has survived those strains is eloquent of the forces compelling its continuance.

Therefore, though the Imperial General Staff and its affiliated military, naval, and air organisations are compelled—because of the supreme importance of the one in a thousand chance if it were to come off—to study the problems of a French war, to prepare London's air-defences and the like, this is not really a vital

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strategic problem of the moment. France may be counted—as in the years before 1914—as an ally, or at the least a benevolent neutral, in any struggle.

We are narrowing the field. We have only left Italy, the Soviet Union and a group of Asiatic countries from Turkey to Japan. The problem is becoming an Eastern one—Eastern and Mediterranean.

Italy we should also be able to exclude were it not for the curiously incalculable character of the existing Italian government. For Italy, dependent upon sea-borne traffic for her fuel and her food, has in the past made it a definite rule of her policy that she cannot afford to quarrel with the nation whose sea-power is still supreme among European states. To blockade Italy would indeed be less easy to-day than in the pre-submarine era. But it should not be impossible. And—except for making Mediterranean traffic difficult by submarine activity off Gibraltar and Port Said—Italy could not retort effectively. Still, there are possibilities in Mussolini's dramatic diplomacy. War with Italy cannot be entirely excluded. But it would only be a serious menace to the Empire if it were associated with trouble in the East; then, indeed, Italian hostility in the Mediterranean would be a danger to be dreaded.

We are left, as the real questions of the day, with the Asiatic States. And not one of them (save Siam, powerlessly compressed between British and French territory) can be ruled out of the class of possible enemies. The central problem of Imperial defence against external enemies becomes visible as primarily an Asiatic problem. And be it noted that it is precisely in Asia (including Egypt and the Sudan) that the twin problem—of defence against internal revolt—is a serious one. In the self-governing Dominions that problem is non-existent. In the tropical African colonies it does not yet seriously exist, though it may come into very real being within the next few decades. The other Crown Colonies are too small and scattered to be of considerable moment.

Asia—and Australia, which neighbours it very closely—are the crux of the whole question. The protection and retention of that band of Imperial territory which stretches with a few breaks

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from the Libyan Desert to the great Barrier Reef is the first and immediate task both of British strategy and of British diplomacy.

Of the Asiatic states which neighbour that territory, four—the Hedjaz, Persia, Afghanistan and Tibet—are important by reason of geographical situation rather than of their military strength. They may be fields of operation. They may operate as allies or instruments either for the British Empire or against it. They take their place, and a by no means insignificant place, in the strategic complex. But they are subordinate, not principal, factors. The principal factors are the four remaining states—the Soviet Union, Turkey, China and Japan. Of these, two are strong military powers, one may rapidly become so ; the fourth is a first-class naval power.

Military defence must be provided against Turkey in Iraq, against the Soviet Union both in Iraq and on the Indian North-West Frontier, against China on the Burmese North-East Frontier. Naval defence against Japan must be provided for Australia, Malaya and the Dutch East Indies (for whose protection—owing to the close inter-connection of the Dutch and British capitalist interests and the naval weakness of Holland—this country tacitly accepts responsibility). In addition there are the lines of communication to be safeguarded and preparations made for counter-attacks.

Here then, stripped of all unessential and less essential things, are the central key-matters of the problem. The British Empire is organised primarily for war, not in Europe, not in America or Africa, but in Southern Asia.

The distribution of its armed forces is in close accordance with the requirements of this purpose.

Take the Army first. There are some 90,000 British troops outside the British Isles. Of these—apart from those who are temporarily and for purely historical reasons on the Rhine—all but a single battalion and a few garrison artillery units are in Southern Asia or on its lines of communication.

India with its 60,000 is of course the main centre of concentration. The rest are in the strategic points to East and West from Gibraltar to Hong Kong : Gibraltar, Malta, Cyprus, Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, Aden, Ceylon, the Straits, China.

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The distribution of the Air Force tells the same story. There are 27½ squadrons at home, 18½ abroad. Of those abroad, 6 are in India, 8 in Iraq, 4 in Egypt and Palestine, the half-squadron in Aden.

The Fleet : one cruiser squadron in the West Indies on the Panama Canal route to Australia ; one in S. Africa on the Cape route ; one in Indian, one in Chinese waters ; and in the Mediterranean a battle squadron, two cruiser squadrons and four destroyer flotillas.

The naval concentration, it will be noticed, is less definitely Eastern than the military. But even this is temporary. So soon as the new bases—Trincomali, Singapore, Port Darwin—are ready, we shall see a big shifting of naval strength to the East.

Indeed, just as Rosyth was the outward and visible sign of the politico-military situation before the war, so Singapore is the outward and visible sign of the new situation. Germany was the certain naval enemy then. Japan (leaving aside for the moment the incalculable Mussolini) is the most probable naval enemy now. And the East—from India to Tasmania and New Zealand—is nakedly open to Japanese attack unless an adequate base exists from which the opposing fleet can work. Singapore, one may note, is the obvious site for such a base. Hong Kong is untenable against land attack unless Kowloon be guarded by elaborate fortifications and a large field army. Singapore is easily defended and supplied, and in as perfect a geographical situation as can be imagined. A battle squadron and two or three cruiser squadrons there, with Trincomali and Port Darwin as subsidiary bases, is the preparation for the possibility of a Japanese war.

We turn to the defence problems of the Asiatic continental frontiers.

The problem of India's North-Western frontier defences is one which has been worked out a hundred times. But if you need evidence that it is being again anxiously studied, note the new Khyber railway, the building of aerodromes near the frontier, the strenuous experimenting with cross-country motor transport, to which the Maharaja of Bardwan makes not over-discreet reference in the published report of the very discreet, formal discussion on Defence in the Imperial Conference. And if you need evidence

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that the problem of the North-Eastern or Chinese frontier is now being taken seriously, note the recent tour of the Commander-in-Chief and the sudden interest taken in the tribes of that tangled area of jungle and mountain which abuts on Szechwan and the upper waters of the Yang-tse.

But perhaps of all these troop, ship and 'plane distributions the most interesting is the concentration of air squadrons in Iraq. The official explanation that an air-garrison is cheaper than troops will scarcely hold good. Else why not substitute 'planes for troops in Egypt as well? The fact of course is that for strategic purposes the Middle East and its garrisons are one. In the event of trouble, troops from Egypt could be in Iraq in a few days, troops from Gibraltar and Malta in Egypt, from home in Gibraltar and Malta. But it is deemed advisable that the army should be concentrated in Egypt, in the centre of the lines of communication, and the air force concentrated in Iraq. Why?

The answer is to be sought in the final problem of attack. Of the four important potential enemies three—Japan, China, Turkey—are exposed to damaging attack from the sea. The fourth—the Soviet Union—is (unless big risks be taken in sending a fleet through the Straits) immune from sea attack in any vital spot.

But—from Mosul to Batoum is only 500 miles; from Mosul to Baku little more. The Transcaucasian oil-fields—perhaps the most vital economic centre in all Russia—are as open to attack from the Mosul air-bases as was London to attack from the German air-bases during the Great War.

That is the real significance of the air-force concentration and of the preparation of air-force bases in Iraq: that, also, is the real significance of our determination to keep Mosul at any cost.

The British strategy for a Russian war is based upon the plan of holding the Indian frontier defensively, while hammering Baku and Batoum by air from Mosul.

Singapore for naval action against China or Japan; Mosul for air action against Russia. Egypt as central military station for the whole Middle East.

Everything is being got ready. The strategic indications reinforce the diplomatic. Great Britain is making all preparation for the great war in Southern Asia.

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GREAT BRITAIN AND CHINA

A Study in Revolutionary Development

By RALPH FOX

THE appearance of the Labour Research Department's booklet on British imperialism in China is an important occasion.[1] The book tells the story of as strange an adventure in the annals of piratical imperialism as has yet been unfolded, and it is for the first time. There have been no end of books on China, but this is the first to give in detail the whole story of one of the most astonishing facts in history ; the wanton destruction of a huge empire by a concert of Great Powers and its division and subjection for the profit of capitalist imperialism. True, China has been conquered before, but the invaders have either receded or been assimilated. This is the first time they have deliberately remained outside the life of the Chinese people and interfered in Chinese affairs simply and solely for the purpose of making money.

The book is short, and necessarily suffers a little from compression, but nevertheless it succeeds in giving an excellent picture of this conquest and the leading part played in it by Great Britain. It gives, moreover, a very clear picture of the forces at work behind the great national movement of liberation which is to-day challenging the whole system of slavery represented by capitalist imperialism. The strength and the implications of the Chinese revolution are for the first time explained in full to English people, for the book goes much deeper and contains far more detail than the recently published pamphlet of Colonel Malone.

The adventure, as every schoolboy knows now, began, so far as Great Britain is concerned, with opium. The East India Company had for long carried on an opium trade with China, which various Chinese governments tried without success to control. In 1839, and again in 1856, attempts to stop the opium trade at Canton

[1] *British Imperialism in China.* (Labour Research Department. Imperialism Series, No. III.)

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resulted in wars with Britain, seizure of territory, and, in 1860, the appointment of a British Inspector-General of Customs.

The L.R.D. book, for reasons of space, leaves out a most interesting period in Chinese history about this time. For in 1851 began the first of those great national movements which have culminated in the present war of liberation. This was the movement known as the rebellion of the Tai Pings, which began as a movement against the Manchu dynasty ; and when that effete government called in foreign help, continued as an anti-foreign movement. The Tai Pings came within an ace of overturning the Manchus, and though their movement degenerated and split up, the rebellion lingered on for nearly twenty years.

The movement was a social-nationalist one, led by a semi-Christian mystic called Houng from the province of Kwantung, the home of every national movement in China. Houng, who had been in contact with American missionaries, at first directed his campaign entirely against the exactions of the foreign Manchu dynasty and their officials. The exploited peasantry rose in thousands to join the banners of the Tai Pings, Southern China was rapidly overrun, and the Yangtse reached at Hankow in 1852. Finally, in the spring of 1853, Nanking, the ancient capital of China, fell to the rebels, in whose hands it remained for eleven years as the capital of their own rebel empire.

The British were not long in putting themselves in touch with the victorious rebels, and a month after the capture of Nanking the governor of Hong Kong was visiting the city in a British cruiser. Further irony of history, these early rebels were also known as " The Reds " from their uniform of a red scarf twisted round the head!

The Tai Pings, although they received some help at first from the foreign Powers, failed to keep their movement united after the death of the great leader Houng. It lost its social basis, brigandage and militarism, those curses of Chinese life, disintegrated it, and it spread no further. Yet the Manchus themselves were unable to reconquer China, so they called in the help of the Powers, and these latter, seeing a better chance of expansion in China by siding with the Manchus than the southern peasants, lent them money, ships, arms and men to carry on the struggle.

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Capitalism had chosen to bind itself up with feudalism in China against the popular will, and so it has been ever since. In the Boxer rising of 1900, in the revolution of 1911, in the support of the militarists against the armies of the Kuomintang, imperialism and reactionary feudalism have marched hand in hand.

The British joined hands with the Manchus after the second Opium War in 1860, when Peking was taken and sacked. Henceforth the struggle against the foreigner and the struggle against the feudal militarists ran together ; even during the Boxer rising this was so to some extent, though only in recent days has the movement clarified and become an irresistible social revolutionary force. For this reason alone the Tai Ping rebellion, and its suppression by military adventurers of the Gordon type, is well worth remembering.

The British worked themselves firmly into China as a result of the Tai Ping wars, and the effects of their occupation on British trade in the next twenty years are excellently shown in the L.R.D. book. China was definitely a market. Between 1851 and 1885 the excess of imports from China over exports thither was over £175,000,000. Yet 1885 is the year when the character of our trade changes. From being a market China becomes a field of development. Instead of textiles capital is exported in the form of loans, railways are laid down, harbours developed and industries started with sweated Chinese labour.

This is also the period of the growth of the native Chinese bourgeoisie. Houng, chief of the Tai Pings, was a disappointed young intellectual slightly tainted with Western revolutionary mystical Christian philosophy. But the new leaders of China got their education not from ignorant missionaries, but in the universities of America and Europe. They became thoroughly Westernised in every way, and together with Western ideas of industrial development they received the complementary ideas of Western national freedom. In the same way the revolutionary initiative in China began to shift from the peasantry to the new industrial workers, employed under slave conditions on the railways and in the new factories.

The Manchus actually fell in 1911, under the impact of the new bourgeoisie starting their revolutionary movement from

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the old historical centre of Canton and the southern provinces. But the bourgeoisie alone could not destroy the chief support of the system of feudal reaction which the Manchus represented, namely, the foreign imperialist Powers led by Great Britain. Yuan Shih Kai was installed as a semi-royal dictator under British protection and the republican movement was momentarily defeated.

Most of its leaders were executed, but one of them, Sun Yat Sen, escaped to his home in Canton and very clearly thought out the problems of the future. He saw, as the Tai Pings in a muddled way had done, that the forces in the way of Chinese freedom were double; the force of feudalism, with its oppression of the peasantry, extortionate taxation, and militarism; and the force of foreign imperialism, with its unequal treaties, concessions, customs service and shameful exploitation of human labour. He saw too that no purely nationalist movement could fight against these two. What was needed was a social-nationalist movement to draw in both workers and peasants on a revolutionary programme to achieve the liberation which the bourgeoisie alone had failed to obtain. Part of his inspiration he got from the Russian revolution in 1905, but he only completed his programme after the great Russian worker-peasant revolution of 1917, which also coincided with a new phase in Chinese politics.

Yuan Shih Kai died in 1916. The Powers dragged China into the war and took thousands of coolies to labour on the various fronts. Chinese nationalism as a result began to revive again, and at Washington in 1921 the Powers made various rash promises with regard to their privileged position in China. At the same time they continued to prevent the unification of the unhappy country by openly supporting the various militarists who had divided its Government after the death of Yuan Shih Kai.

Sun Yat Sen meanwhile succeeded in turning his nationalist party, the Kuomintang, into a real national revolutionary party based on the principles of national equality, democracy and Socialism. Its influence spread: a Kuomintang government was established in Canton; the workers all over China felt its influence and from 1923, led by the Communist Party, which was affiliated

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to the Kuomintang, they began to establish labour unions and to strike against the foreign employers.

The rest is recent history, though ably set out and explained in the L.R.D. book. To-day the Kuomintang armies have reached and conquered the Yangtse Valley. They are in the position of the Tai Pings in 1853, and have even been visited by the British Minister! Will they succeed in uniting China, or will their social basis disintegrate and shall we see British officers leading armies against them in the name of some shadow Government at Peking, as Gordon did in 1863?

We have said enough in this article to show that this will not be so. The young Chinese working class, with its militant unions and revolutionary Communist Party, the enlightened left wing of the bourgeoisie who have learnt from the West the social virtues of industrial organisation and the social evils of capitalism, are guarantees of a strong and invincible leadership. Behind them are the peasant masses, awaking to consciousness of their double exploitation by feudal militarism and foreign imperialism. They accept the lead of the Kuomintang, the party of the revolutionary alliance of the peasantry with the young proletariat and the young bourgeoisie of China. To disintegrate the present social revolutionary movement in China, Imperialism would need to be far stronger than in the 'sixties. But it is not. In the middle of the last century Western capitalism, especially British capitalism, was growing vigorously. To-day it is visibly decaying in many places, above all in Britain, which has been the leader of imperialist piracy in China hitherto, while over the vast territories of Russia it has disappeared altogether, and for thousands of miles of land frontier contiguous to China there is to-day a chain of free Socialist republics.

Undoubtedly, the imperialists will try once again to divide and conquer. There is a rich Chinese capitalist class which is open to anti-revolutionary propaganda, and to suborn this class in order to disintegrate once more the Chinese revolution becomes the principal task of imperialist diplomacy. The resistance to this falls largely on the Chinese Communist Party, on whose ability to unite peasantry with proletariat under the leadership of the latter depends the successful future of the Chinese revolution. For the

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wide sections of the bourgeoisie who are to-day revolutionary will be made to waver between the workers and the richer capitalists, once the new imperialist tactics start, and will cease to be a fully reliable part of the national revolutionary front.

This question of the peasantry is an enormous question in China, the country with the largest peasant population in the world, and it is perhaps to be regretted that the L.R.D. book does not treat it with sufficient depth or give it the large place due to its importance. Yet it must be confessed it is a problem to baffle the best equipped student, for reliable economic information about the situation of the Chinese peasant is almost non-existent. He is very much a dark horse, but just now he holds the future of Asia in his hands.

The interest of the British Labour Movement in the tremendous revolution now going on should be quickened by this new book, the first of its kind on China. There is a very definite community of interests between the British and the Chinese workers. It has been shown by the resolution of the Scarborough Congress of the Trades Unions to the effect that a delegation of inquiry be sent to China; it has been shown again by the " Hands off China " resolution at Bournemouth and by the recent setting up of a British Labour Council for Chinese Freedom. The British Labour Movement now has before it the information it has long been needing to give substance to these expressions of a common Anglo-Chinese working-class interest against British imperialism.

Every trade unionist and every propagandist should read the L.R.D. book on China and draw from it the obvious lessons of setting up committees in every town for the defence of the Chinese revolution, and the sending of the long-deferred delegation of the T.U.C. to China to establish close relations between the workers of the two countries.

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BOOK REVIEWS

THE BRITISH GENERAL STRIKE

The Political Meaning of the Great Strike. By J. T. Murphy. (Communist Party of Great Britain, 1s. 6d.)

The General Strike, May, 1926 : Trades Councils in Action. By Emile Burns. (Labour Research Department, 1s. 6d.)

The General Strike, May, 1926 : Its Origin and History. By R. Page Arnot (Labour Research Department, 3s. 6d.)

J. T. MURPHY'S book (to which J. R. Campbell has written a clear, concise preface) is one of the first serious contributions to our library on the General Strike. It was written directly under the influence of the events of May, and while the miners' fight was in full swing. In every page the reader can feel the breath of the great fight. At the same time the book is well documented, and the author has, on the whole, succeeded in bringing home his main thesis : " That the General Strike of May, 1926, is the greatest political landmark in the history of the working class of Britain. It proclaimed as nothing else has ever done that the challenge of class power, raised four times in six years, is inextricably bound up with the growth of the working class and the decay of capitalism."

In the first chapter the author easily disposes of the theory that the General Strike of 1926 was due to some " exceptional circumstances or to some malignant conspiracy." The following two chapters : " What Led to the General Strike," a short clear sketch of the political and economic events which preceded the General Strike, and " Red Friday and the Nine Months' Truce," demonstrate the failure of our movement to grasp the great changes which have taken place in Britain since the war. The *Labour Register*, published by the Labour Research Department, dealt to a certain extent with the first great wave of unrest which followed the war, but our literature has paid far too little attention to these great changes, and it is obvious that we shall have to study in greater detail not only capitalist strategy, but the policy of our Trade Union bureaucracy in post-war England.

In the third chapter, Mr. Murphy has given us a good selection of documents concerning the activities of different social groups in the period between Red Friday (July 31, 1925) and the day when the General Strike was declared. These documents show perfectly clearly that, with the exception of the Communist Party and the Minority Movement, there was not a single Labour organisation which did anything to prepare the workers for the inevitable struggle ahead. We think Mr. Murphy has done well to reprint the statement made by the I.L.P. in the *New Leader* two weeks before the strike was declared. In this statement the I.L.P. endeavoured to explain why it did not participate in preparing the workers to resist the attack of the mine-owners and the Government. We think it worth while to give the exact words of the I.L.P. : " Silence within the Labour Movement has become a test of loyalty This reserve was inevitable and within limits it was proper.

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It is not for *outsiders* (italics ours) to incite the miners to fight : still less is it their business to remind them of the risks they run."

The truth of the matter is that no one was inciting the miners to fight except the mineowners, who were determined to lower the standards of the miners still further. The official leaders of the Labour Movement " incited " the miners to surrender. And the I.L.P., posing as Pilate, declared that it had nothing to do with the affair, and left it to their leaders to crucify the miners. Still, we must admit that the I.L.P. had the courage to remind the miners—true, in a negative form—about the risks they ran !

In his description of the General Strike itself, in which the author actively participated, Mr. Murphy combines his personal experiences with a careful study of documents relating to the crisis. Included in the latter are a number of important documents showing the different tendencies in the international movement in relation to the strike. We think, however, it was a mistake on Mr. Murphy's part to omit from the documents bearing on the tragic event of May 12 the telegram sent out by the Communist Party to its district organisations. (This document will be found in the book by R. Page Arnot, with which we deal below.)

Mr. Murphy did well, however, to include in his book the agreements concluded after the strike by the Transport Workers' Union, the Printing Unions and the Railway Unions. These documents will help the reader to understand the mentality of our trade union leadership, and at the same time they form, so to speak, a good appendix to the description of the General Strike itself.

The chapter on " Casualties " is of necessity far from adequate, as at the time when the author wrote it was impossible to have a real idea of the casualties of that great fight. It should always be remembered that the General Strike, a great event in itself, was closely linked up with the miners' fight, and that this fight continued long after the General Strike was called off. Only now would it be possible to prepare a full list of the casualties.

We find that we are unable to agree with all the reflections of the author in his final chapter : " Reflections and Perspectives." Mr. Murphy is of the opinion that the Conservative Party and the whole capitalist class emerged from the struggle with increased political power. Unfortunately, lack of space prevents us from following up the arguments which Mr. Murphy puts forward to defend this point of view. We will only say this. It is a well-known fact that in every struggle between the classes the ruling class has the advantage of being better organised and better prepared for the fray. The new class which is struggling for power organises and consolidates its forces during the process of battle. For that reason the Baldwin Government would have preferred the miners and the rest of the workers to have agreed to accept the lowering of their standards without a conflict. During the first stages of a great struggle for power, the victories of the dominant class, as the defeats of the oppressed class, are equally inevitable. But the advantage for the new class in these struggles is that it is bound to become stronger while fighting, at the same time weakening its powerful and well-organised enemy. From this point of view, we believe that during the General Strike and the miners' lock-out, notwithstanding the fact that the conditions of the workers were

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worsened, the political power of the working class actually grew, while the political power of the dominant class suffered irreparable loss.

Again, we do not think that Mr. Murphy's definition that the feathers of the Left Wing were blown away by the organised power of the Right Wing is a convincing one. But this question we will take up when reviewing the book by R. Page Arnot.

On the whole, we think that this book will help the reader to obtain a clearer understanding, not only of the political meaning of the great strike, but of some of the lessons which this strike contains for the working class in Great Britain.

* * * * *

In our opinion the most interesting part of the book prepared by Emile Burns for the Labour Research Department is the section which contains the reports of the local organisations, numbering 131 in all. These reports are undoubtedly a mine of information for the student of the Labour Movement in general, and of the General Strike in particular.

Not all the reports are of the same value. Furthermore, we think that, on the whole, they are too formal in character, and do not give a sufficient idea of local initiative, of the activity of the masses. We would like to submit the following suggestions for the consideration of the Labour Research Department: first, to try once more to obtain reports from those localities which sent no response to the questionnaire sent out; and, secondly, to re-arrange that questionnaire in such a way as to allow for more detailed information to be given in the answers.

To our mind the most striking factor in these reports is the almost universal opinion expressed with regard to the state of the strike on May 12. As the report from Aldershot puts it, "No sign of weakening whatever; stronger if anything." And they nearly all speak in the same tone. Some add: "The spirit of the workers, both men and women, could not be better." (Bermondsey.) Bethnal Green put it in a more pathetic form: "Our nightmare was always pushing second line of defence back to work." The same idea is expressed by Canterbury in a more simple way: "Our difficulty was to keep the men not involved at work." According to Deeside, "Members were surprised at sudden collapse." Even the constituency of J. H. Thomas reports: "There were no signs of weakening; on the other hand, more workers were coming out and joining the strike."

We have given a few quotations on this point because among the reasons given for calling off the strike was that the workers were weakening and that there was a danger of the strike collapsing. The facts as stated in these reports from those who were actually conducting the struggle in the country prove that the reverse was the case. The fight was only just developing. And the question that inevitably arises is whether it was not the weakening but the strengthening of the strike which frightened the General Council into abject surrender.

We are bound to say, however, that the reports do not convey a sufficiently clear idea of the feelings and reactions of the masses in the fight. In this connection, though, the report from Dartford and the special note to the report

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from the Dartford Divisional Labour Party is well worth studying. In the special note the writer says: "The men were not actuated by any revolutionary feelings. They felt they were fighting the Government to get a fair deal for the miners upon the basis of no reduction in wages and no increase in hours. On that issue the men were solid and their enthusiasm was white-hot." It would be interesting to know what the writer of these lines would consider to be revolutionary feelings! But we agree with him when he says: "It was a great beginning, but a pitiable ending."

The reader will also find in these reports an answer to the important question of preparedness. The reports prove convincingly that the movement, and, in particular, the local organisations, was not at all prepared for the great fight. In this connection we call special attention to the reports from Middlesbrough, London and Sheffield.

In the first part of this book the author tries to give a résumé of the reports which form the second half. We venture to state, however, that Mr. Burns did not exhaust the rich material at his disposal. In one particular, we think he has omitted a very important fact. While he refers to the existence of Councils of Action in 1920 in connection with the Polish war against Russia, he entirely omits to state that before Red Friday, on the initiative of the Communist Party and the Minority Movement, a considerable number of Councils of Action were set up in different parts of the country. And it was the agitation carried on by both these organisations for more than twelve months in favour of Council of Actions which made possible the rapid formation of such bodies when the General Strike was declared. In our opinion, the new feature in the fight was not the Councils of Action, but the defence corps. We wonder why the author made so little of this, and failed to tell his readers who took up the campaign for the formation of these defence corps, and how the fight for them was conducted.

* * * * *

We have been fortunate in obtaining an advance proof of the second volume on the General Strike, by R. Page Arnot, about to be published by the Labour Research Department: *The General Strike, May, 1926: Its Origin and History.* The Labour Research Department itself regards this book as a companion volume to the book prepared by Mr. Burns. For our part we think that Mr. Arnot's book should be read first, as it contains the documents and explanations necessary for an adequate understanding of the material contained in Mr. Burns' book.

In the foreword to his book Mr. Arnot states that he tried "to give not only a documented chronicle of these twelve days, but also a sketch of the preceding twelve months." We wish to say right at the beginning that the "documented chronicle" is arranged in such a way that it holds the interest of the reader unabated from start to finish. We have here, not a collection of dry documents of use for reference only, but a vivid story of stirring characters in a great social drama. In his sketch of the preceding twelve months Mr. Arnot has given a very well documented survey of the events which practically prepared the great fight, as well as the great defeat.

Let us begin with the so-called sketch. Now that it has become rather a fashion in our movement to talk sneeringly, and even arrogantly, about the

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mere slogans to which the miners were tied, and which the wise leaders of the General Council saw fit to abandon, it is of the utmost importance to remind ourselves of what was the attitude of the Labour Movement towards these slogans in the days when the previous General Council acted for the miners and not for the mineowners.

The reviewer is rather tempted to quote at great length some of the documents contained in this book. Unfortunately, lack of space makes this impossible, and we will have to confine ourselves to giving a general idea of their significance and meaning.

The documents contained in this section prove convincingly that organised Labour in the months which followed Red Friday did not even entertain the idea of accepting conditions which would lower the standards of the workers in any shape or form. The keynote of all the speeches and resolutions of that period was that the workers must not only retain the gains secured in the past, but must improve their conditions. Very influential Labour leaders, who by no means belonged to the extremists, spoke loudly of a Labour offensive. At the same time the author shows that, while pleasant speeches were being made and good resolutions were being passed, the responsible bodies of the Labour Movement did not make any use of the nine months between Red Friday and the end of April, when the subsidy ceased, to prepare for the coming fight.

We must congratulate Mr. Arnot on his masterful selection of documents, in which he has succeeded in giving a vivid picture of the three main forces involved in the social arena. We will deal with these forces one by one.

(1) *The Government.*—All the documents reproduced in this book show that the Government had a very clear policy which it pursued from the day following Red Friday to the first day of the General Strike. That policy can be summed up in a few words. The Government strained every effort to get the miners to agree to a lowering of their standards without a fight. Baldwin would then have been enabled to continue speaking about "peace in our time." At the same time, in the event of the impossibility of avoiding a conflict, the Government was making every preparation to crush the workers. In other words, the Government had a clear purpose in mind—the lowering of the standards of the workers—and it was determined to achieve this purpose—by diplomacy if possible, by victory on the battlefield if necessary.

(2) *The General Council and Labour Party Leaders.*—The official industrial and political leaders did not even think of making any use of the nine months which the Government decided was necessary to make adequate preparations for the coming fight. The trade union leaders were busy making all kinds of vague general speeches, while the leaders of the Labour Party were working hard to make that party safe for Liberalism. Their aim was to settle the conflict by means of a compromise. Many of them relied mainly on their negotiating abilities, and they were sure that negotiations would prevent a conflict. They assisted the Government in its efforts to avoid a fight, but at the same time took no steps to defend the workers should a fight become inevitable. Up to the very last day they believed that they would be able to induce both sides to make concessions, which meant in practice that they were prepared to agree to the lowering of the workers' standards without even trying to resist the mineowners and the mineowners'

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Government. In the last hour the strike was practically imposed upon them—on the one hand, by the Government, which wanted either complete surrender without a fight, or victory if a fight came ; and, on the other hand, by the workers, who were not prepared to accept the worsening of their conditions. And when the strike eventually came the leaders tried to combine secret negotiations with open appeals to the workers to stand firm.

(3) *The Communist Party and the Minority Movement.*—These were practically the only two organisations that worked for preparedness, and which foresaw clearly the inevitable fight and the magnitude of that fight. While it cannot be denied that these two organisations exercised a certain influence upon the workers, they did not participate in shaping the policy of the official leaders of the Labour Movement.

We must repeat that the parts played by these various forces in the General Strike are not depicted by the author from his own store of knowledge or imagination, but by convincing documents. And these documents are arranged in such a way that the reader sees not only the conflicting ideas, but the social groups behind them.

The chapter dealing with the General Strike itself—"The Eleventh Hour"—is comparatively weaker than the previous. The great march of millions of workers could not be represented entirely by documents, although Mr. Arnot has included all those documents which are necessary for understanding how the strike developed and how it was betrayed. In this chapter the author is true to his method. The social forces in struggle are represented in their own words.

We regret that we are unable to speak so enthusiastically about either the introduction or the conclusion of this book. For instance, the description of the parties to the dispute is somewhat too formal in character. Again, the famous Constitution, which played such a big part in the propaganda of the Government, and which revealed the narrowmindedness of the leadership of our Labour Movement, is neither well explained nor sufficiently well interpreted. While reading this chapter it occurred to us that it would be a good thing to reprint that brilliant pamphlet of Ferdinand Lassalle—"What is the Constitution ?"—in order to give some elementary education to the authors of the innumerable articles in the *British Worker* who were so anxious to prove that they were not against the Constitution.

The final chapter, in which the author makes some conclusions is too short and too sketchy ; the problem of the Left and the Right is treated too formally. It is an undeniable fact that a part of the bureaucracy of the trade unions tried to adapt itself to the trend of the workers towards the Left during the last few years. To them the eventful days of May were a great test. In this test they had to choose between the masses who were fighting and their colleagues who were preparing the defeat and betrayal of those workers. And they chose. They lined up with the organisers of the defeat. Their crime is undoubtedly greater than the crime of the Right Wingers, who were at least true to their principles. They helped the Right Wing to do their dirty work. The documents printed in this book are a standing indictment against them. Unfortunately the conclusion weakens that indictment.

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In conclusion we would like to say with regard to the three books under review that they are undoubtedly the most important publications concerning the General Strike yet issued. We hope at least that they will serve as an impetus to the working class to study the great events treated in these volumes, the lessons of which have not yet been brought home to the full extent. But these books by no means exhaust the history and lessons of the General Strike and the struggle which followed that strike. We need a special library on this subject, to which the books in question make a good contribution. We have no hesitation in saying that the authors of these books deserve the gratitude of the Labour Movement for the important contributions they have made towards a real understanding of this historic period.

P. B.

Publications Received

The Comradeship of Economic Equality. (The Committee of the Llano Circle. 8 pp., 3d.)

Our Radio Programmes: What is Wrong and Why? By Corbett-Smith. (John Bale, Sons and Danielssons, Ltd. 38 pp., 1s.)

The I.C.W.P.A. A Speech delivered in Moscow by Geo. Lansbury. (I.C.W.P.A. 28 pp., 2d.)

Fraternity and Evolution. A Study in Social Dynamics. By Tom Swain. (I.L.P. Publications Dept. 56 pp., 1s.)

Marx, Lenin and the Science of Revolution. By Max Eastman. (Allen and Unwin. 263 pp., 7s. 6d.)

The General Strike, May, 1926: Trades Councils in Action. By Emile Burns. (Labour Research Department.)

Eighth Annual Report of the Industrial Welfare Society for the Year ended June 30, 1926. (Industrial Welfare Society.)

The British Public and the General Strike. By Kingsley Martin. (The Hogarth Press. 128 pp., 3s. 6d.)

Kenya. By Norman Leys. With an Introduction by Professor Gilbert Murray. (Third edition. Hogarth Press, 4s. 6d.)

The Wages of Unskilled Labour in Manufacturing Industries in the United States, 1890-1924. By Whitney Coombes. (Columbia University Press, $2.25.)

Poland's Economic Development. By Prof. Francis Bujak, Ph.D. (George Allen and Unwin. 67 pp., 3s.)

New China; Report of an Investigation. By Col. C. L'Estrange Malone. Part I: The Political Situation. (I.L.P. Publication Dept. 20 pp. quarto, 6d.)

Red Money. (Labour Research Department, 6d.)

The Miners' Struggle and the Big Five Banks: How Victory can be Secured. With a Foreword by A. J. Cook. (The Labour Research Dept. 16 pp., 1d.)

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